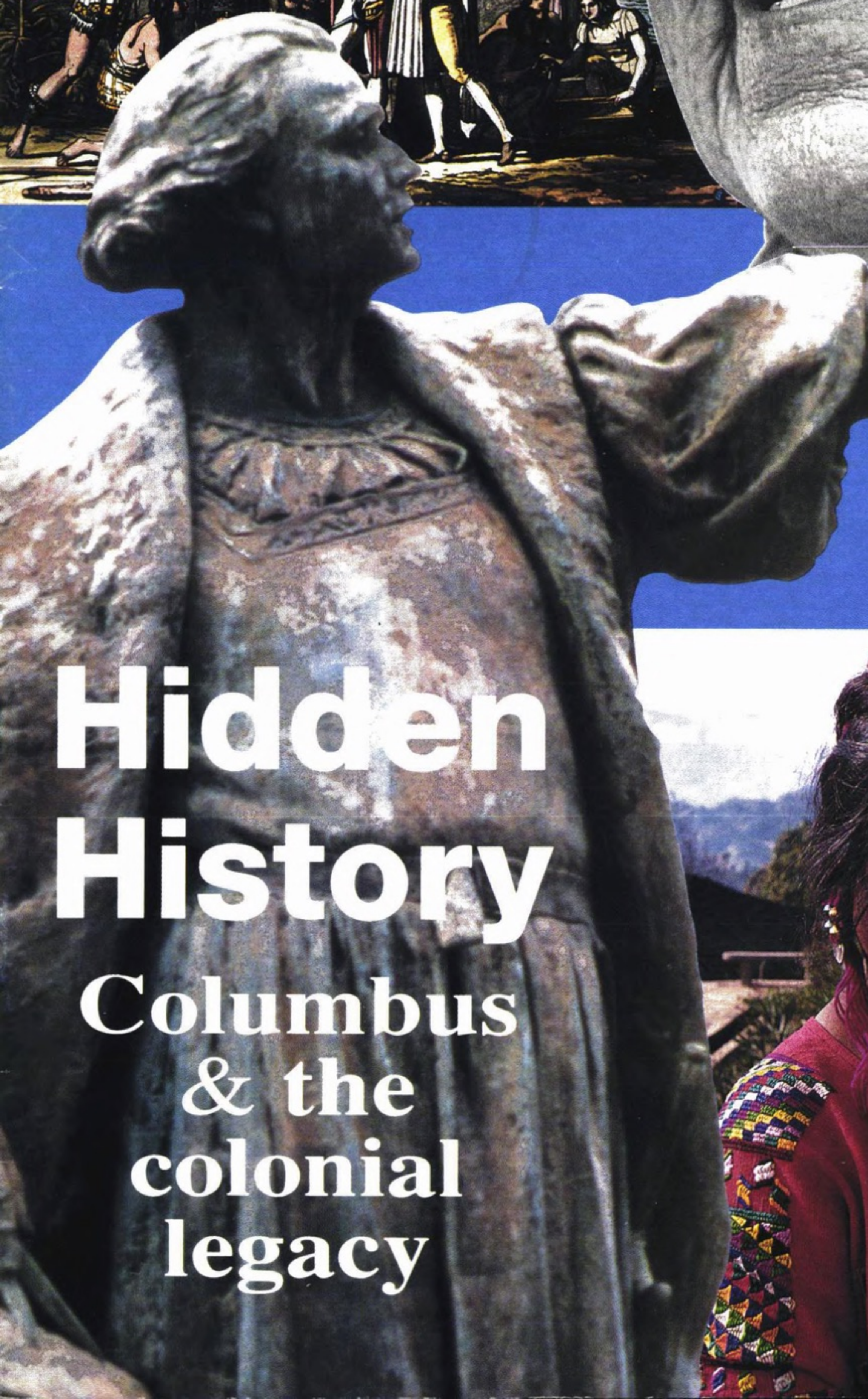
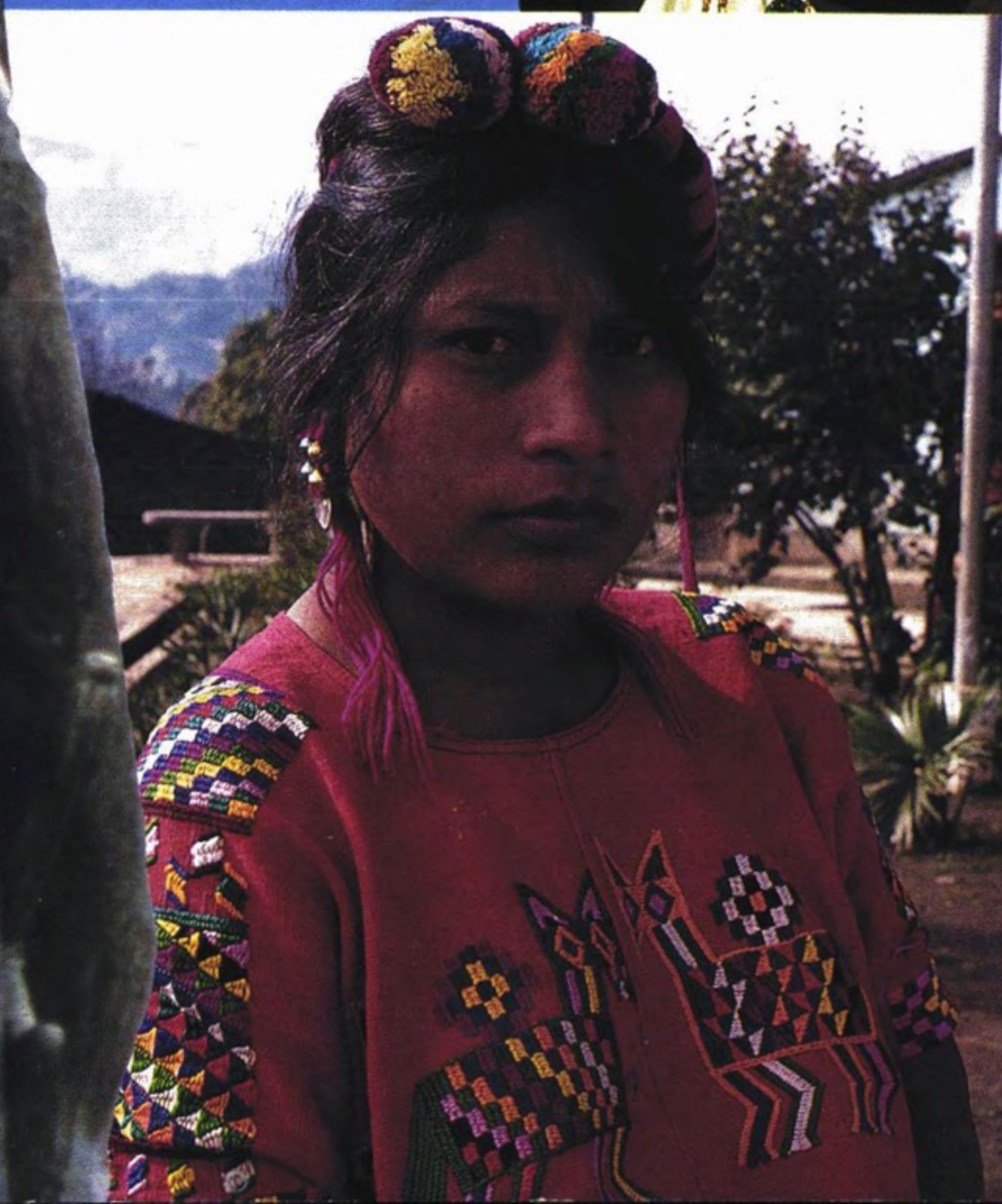


No. 226 / DECEMBER 1991



Hidden History

Columbus
& the
colonial
legacy



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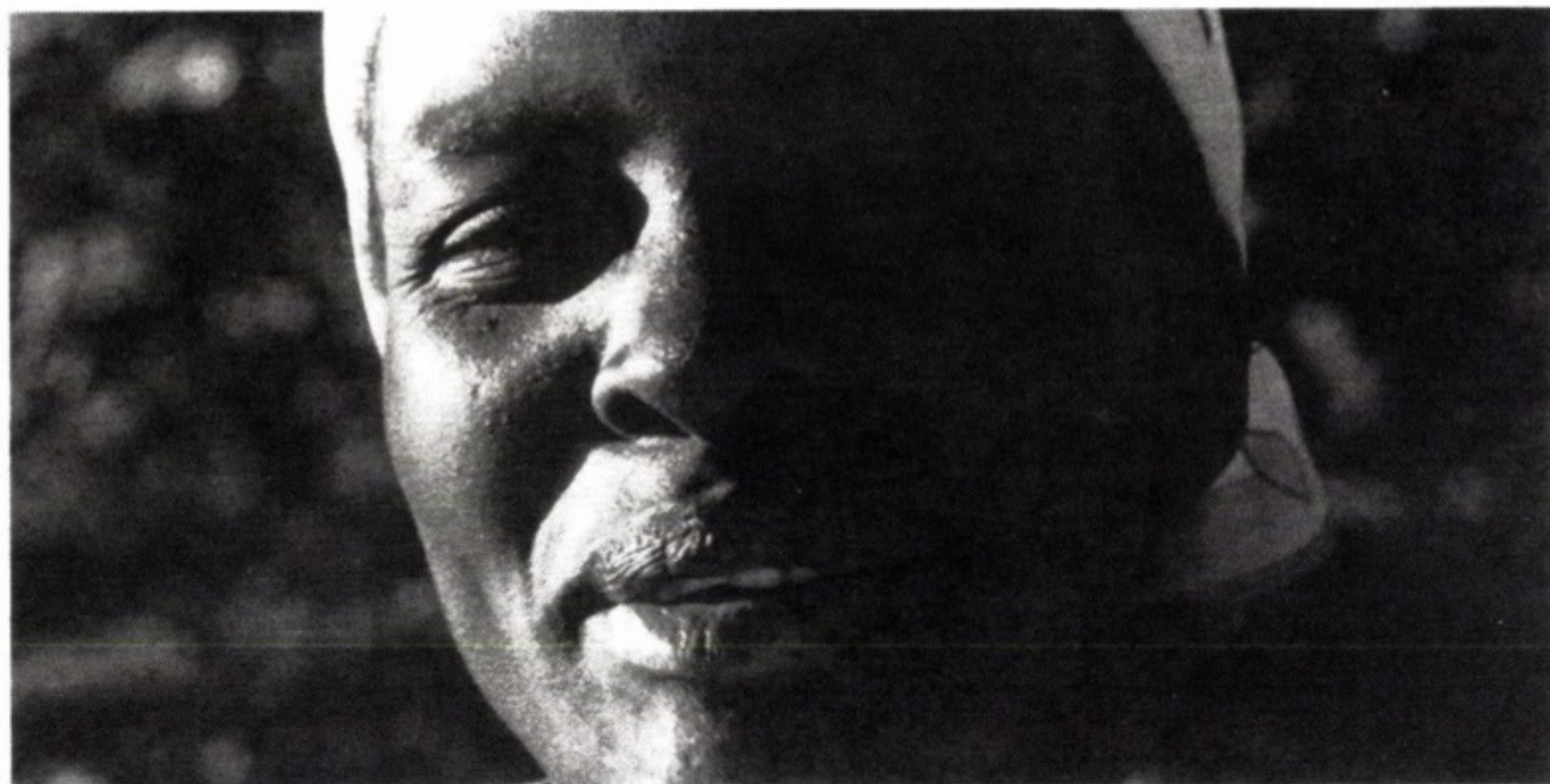
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DEXTER TIRANTI

Feminism in the 1990s

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IN NEXT
MONTH'S ISSUE:

- **Women-and-development:** why African women are skeptical.
- **Black, womanist, lesbian, socialist, radical, separatist ... feminist.** Do labels help?
- **Feminist success** stories from around the world.
- **Afghan women** against fundamentalism.
- **What** is a woman, anyway?
- **The generation gap.**



ISSN 0305 9529

New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

The **NI** magazine is edited, produced and sold by **New Internationalist Publications Ltd** which is co-operatively run by: *Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Wayne Ellwood, Alan Hughes, Guy Montgomery, Gill Moore, Clive Offley, David Ransom, James Rowland, Sue Shaw, Debbie Simms, Kate Stott, Richard Swift, Dexter Tiranti, Jim Turner, Troth Wells.* Editorial responsibility rests with the co-operative, whose purpose is to communicate development ideals through print and film to the widest possible audience.

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UK: 120-126 Lavender Ave, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HP. Tel. (081) 685 0372.

Individuals £18.40 p.a.; £5.40 qtlly.

Institutions £35 p.a.

Canada: 35 Riviera Drive, Unit 17, Markham, Ontario L3R 8N4. Tel. (416) 946 0406.

Individuals 1 yr – \$38.52 (includes \$2.52 GST)

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Rest of the World: 120 – 126 Lavender Ave, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HP. Tel. (081) 685 0372.

Individuals £22; Institutions £40. Please pay in sterling by UK Cheque, Eurocheque, Visa, Mastercard or Banker's Draft. Despatch by air only.

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES

UK: 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW. Tel. (0865) 728181. Fax. (0865) 793152. [Advertising: Tel. (0384) 373421. Fax. (0384) 441904]

Canada: 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel. (416) 588 6478. Fax: (416) 537 6435.

Australia: PO Box 82, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065. Tel. (03) 419 7111.

MAILINGS

Occasionally we agree to exchange our subscribers' names with organizations whose aims are broadly in line with our own. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

Cover and UK inside pages printed by Pindar Graphics, Scarborough, North Yorkshire.

North American inside pages printed in Canada by Webcom, Scarborough, Ontario.

The **NI** is distributed to the UK news trade by Magnum Distribution, 22-26 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Tel. (071) 253 3456. Fax. (071) 608 0726.

The **NI** in North America (USPS 329-770) is published monthly by New Internationalist Publications, 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6H 1M1. US 2nd class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. US Postmaster send address changes to: The **NI**, P O Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092. US Office of Publication, Lewiston, NY 14092. Registered with Alternative Press Index.

Syndication/Permissions: Cover Stories, The Observer, Chelsea Bridge House, Queenstown Road, London SW8 4NN. Tel. (071) 350 3228. Fax. (071) 627 5570.

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500 YEARS OF STRUGGLE IN LATIN AMERICA

**THEY TORE OFF OUR FRUITS, THEY CUT OFF
OUR BRANCHES, THEY BURNED OUR TRUNK,
BUT THEY WERE NOT ABLE TO KILL OUR ROOTS**

(CUC)



As Europe prepares to celebrate the Quincentenary of Columbus' 'discovery' of the American continent the peoples of Latin America commemorate the legacy of European domination and exploitation. We remember with them the landless, the massacred, the disappeared, the tortured, the lost identity of whole peoples, the earth's riches destroyed for ever.

We celebrate with them the indomitable spirit of her peoples, who continue in their struggle for freedom from poverty and injustice, for the right to build their own history and future, and to preserve their own identity.

UNAIS (United Nations Association International Service) has been working in Latin America for 12 years. We send skilled and experienced people to work in long-term development projects initiated by local people – in health, water and agriculture.

Our project workers work alongside the poorest sections of society, passing on skills and strengthening local people's efforts to improve their situation, to gain a fairer share of resources, and to achieve self-determination.

Help us to support the peoples of Latin America in their struggle to build their own future by filling in the coupon below. All donations will be used to directly support our overseas work.

**WE ARE A BUNCH OF TWIGS,
BUT TOGETHER WE MAKE A HUGE FIRE**

(ALBERTO MUENATA)

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ANALYSIS

a new review of politics
and world affairs
Winter 1991

The Ecology of Failure

Alison Costello looks at the rise and fall of the Greens and argues that the attempt to revitalise liberalism was never likely to succeed.

The Aids Business

Susil Gupta argues that a burgeoning Aids bureaucracy has dominated the politics of the disease and has prevented the development of a radical response.

Adios Fidel

In the light of the Soviet events and the Cuban Communist Party's forthcoming congress, Enrique Sanchez examines the prospects for Castro and the Cuban bureaucracy.

Plus, articles on the Middle East, Japan, book reviews, etc.

For more information, please contact
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In 1992....

Peru will have no cause for celebration.

- * IMF policies are still pushing down living standards
- * Poverty, hunger and disease are more widespread than ever
- * Military and paramilitary violations of human rights carry on unabated
- * Sendero Luminoso continues to feed on deprivation and despair

In Britain, the **Peru Support Group** seeks to provide information on Peru and to channel support to popular organisations there. If you would like to join PSG you will receive the bimonthly Peru Update. Write to PSG, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN, (071-359-2270) enclosing a cheque for £10 (individuals), £3 (unwaged), or £30 (organisations).

A VEGETARIAN'S DILEMMA ...

Was there a night in Mexico when you couldn't face the frioles again and had chicken? Or a time in a Zambian village when you ate the mutton stew rather than seem rude by refusing meat?

WHILE some countries offer plenty of non-meat dishes, finding vegetarian meals in other parts of the world can be the ultimate challenge – just the kind of thing NI vegetarians would know all about. So we would like to hear from you with recipes from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East for our new **NI Vegetarian Food Book**.

We'd welcome starters, main courses and any other recipes that you'd care to send and we will acknowledge those that we use in the book.

Please send them together with the name of the dish and a little background info about it and/or where you ate it; the quantities and method for preparation; and substitute ingredients for items not readily available here.

Mail to: Troth Wells, NI, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK or to your national office listed on this page.

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In the name of civilisation and progress, the lives of tribal people are being threatened. Their homes are demolished, their land taken away. Rainforests are bulldozed and rivers polluted. All these things are done illegally.

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1992 is an important year for people in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean because it not only marks moves towards greater European integration, but also the 500th Anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas.

The arrival of the first Europeans in Latin America marked the beginning of an exploitative and often brutal relationship between the two continents. 500 years on, it's time for a new era of cooperation between Europe and Latin America.

War on Want has joined 21 other international aid agencies in a Campaign to ensure that Latin America is not forgotten in 1992. We have been working in partnership with people in Latin America and the Caribbean for over 2 decades, supporting practical work addressing the needs of poor communities.

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- ☐ I would like more information about the 1992 Campaign
- ☐ I would like details on how I can support War on Want's projects in Latin America
- ☐ I would like to become a member of War on Want
- ☐ Name and address ...



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Telephone (071) 620 1111. War on Want is a registered charity No. 208724



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Envelopes are supplied and the message inside reads
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THIS MONTH'S THEME

Columbus 500

FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR

My first hint there was more to this Columbus business than meets the eye came months ago. I was on the phone to Hawaii trying to sweetly cajole a potential contributor into writing something for this issue. And I was having some trouble establishing my credentials. (A familiar problem: I sometimes wonder enviously what it would be like to have the instant recognition of the mainstream news magazines.)

'New Internationalist?' There was a moment of hesitation. Then: 'I'm afraid I don't know the magazine.' I took the opportunity to do my standard spiel, a two-minute potted summary of what we do and how we do it, with the usual apologies about our inelegant and slightly misleading name.

In the end it went pretty well. The problem was not so much convincing the writer that we were an acceptable publication, it was his publisher's deadline. He was writing a book on Columbus and the finished manuscript was due in eight weeks. No time – end of story.

When the same thing happened a week later I realized the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' landfall in the Americas was not only big news, it was big business. Later, I discovered more than 200 books on Columbus-related subjects are scheduled for release in 1992.

There are also at least two Hollywood films being made, countless television specials planned, lavish exhibits and 'official' celebrations in at least 30 countries.

The press, too, has jumped on the bandwagon; dozens of articles appeared in advance of 1992 and gallons more ink will be spilled over the next year.

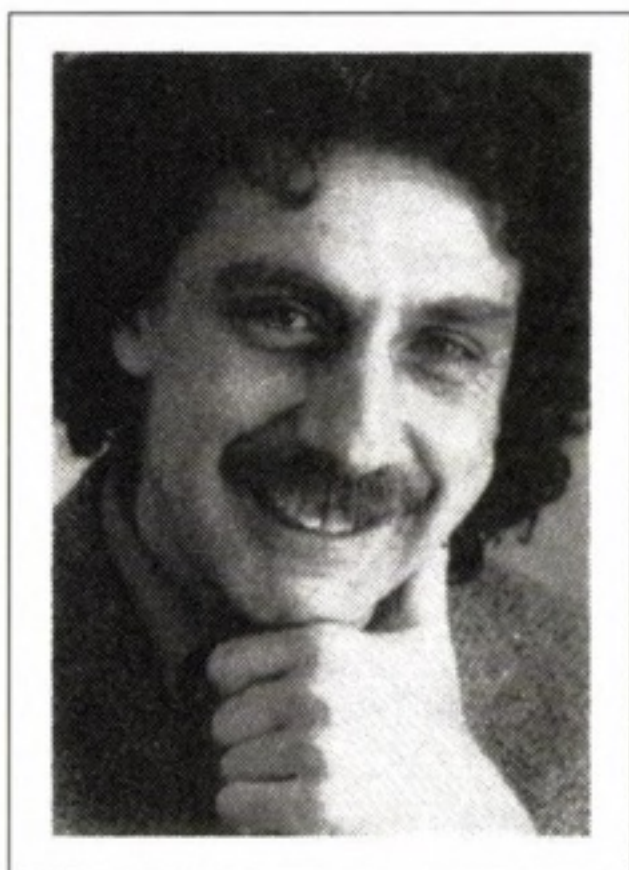
In the US, where the 'Admiral of the ocean sea' is regarded with the same warm reverence Italian fascists still feel for Mussolini, the centre of the celebrations will be 'Ameriflora 92', a \$100 million international flower show being built in Columbus, Ohio. And the excess doesn't stop there. In the 'truth-is-stranger-than-fiction' category there is to be a symbolic marriage between the statue of Columbus

in Barcelona and New York's Statue of Liberty.

So you can understand why I had my doubts whether we would actually be able to say anything new on the subject.

I'm less worried about that now. It finally struck me that the enormous amount of verbiage being churned out on the old sailor is exactly the reason he's such a perfect subject for us. After all we're in the business of distilling alternative views to the daily swell of information and presenting it to readers in a digestible form.

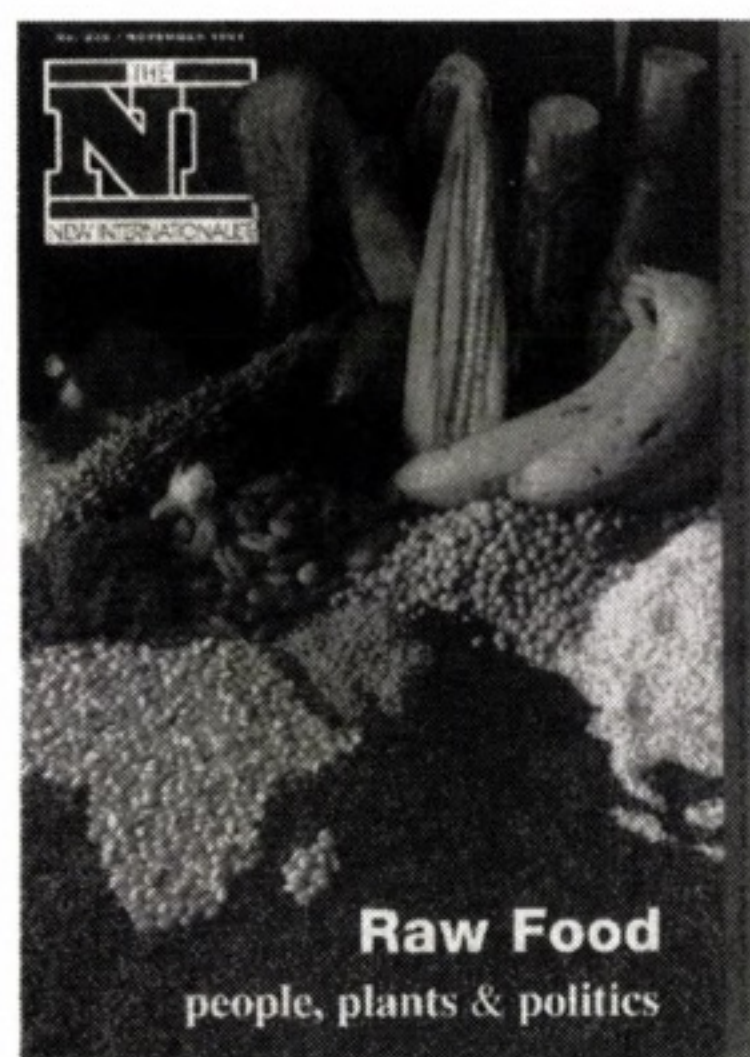
And that's what I've tried to do here – to fill in some of the background to the basic issues that will be debated over the next year. But more than that I've tried to give a prominent voice to alternative voices: indigenous people and Third World writers. That's one big reason why what you read here will be different. Consider this your introductory handbook to the next 500 years.



Wayne Ellwood
for the New Internationalist Co-operative

Feeding the few

Your magazine on *Food* (NI 225) was an interesting way to introduce some of the people and issues behind world food. But I found it lacked punch over the issue of vegetarianism.



True the 'main meal' and foods in the magazine were not meat. But surely the only answer to the world's food problems lies in a rejection of meat and the wasteful, cruel, environmentally damaging intensive-farming methods in the West – now increasingly being exported to developing countries.

About 90 per cent of the protein available in plant food is lost when it is converted to meat. Globally, over half of all crops grown are used as animal fodder, and one quarter of the world's fish catch is eaten by domestic animals.

Since we in the West eat far more than people in developing countries and have a range of alternative foods and the money to buy them, we should stop eating meat now.

Jane Ashworth
Crewe, UK

Legalize drugs

I have for a long time thought that drugs should be legalized and rendered cheap and easily available (*The Crazy War on Drugs* NI 224). I read nothing in your magazine to persuade me otherwise. The advantages would be: there would be no major profits to be made from drugs, and therefore no incentives for organized drug trafficking and associated crimes; addicts could maintain their



The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

habits cheaply and would therefore have no reason to commit crimes; the glamour of addiction would vanish; and the vast expense of trying to eradicate and control the 'problem' would be saved.

Drugs would be sold by a government agency at knock-down prices with no restriction to anyone. And that alone would probably be a bigger discouragement to users than any number of police 'swoops' and 'crackdowns'.

Mr P A Evans
Newnham, UK

Released

I was released from prison two weeks ago as a result of pressure from Amnesty International. And I owe a debt of gratitude to you and everyone who stands up for people like me.

Thank you for your valuable help; your magazine teaches me everything. I'll never forget that there are always people who try to help others.

Mashrouhi Dahbi
Mellah, Morocco

Meat greedy

I was pleased to see T Bussey's letter (*Letters* NI 223) expressing disappointment that NI promote and sell a non-vegetarian cook book. NI is acting irresponsibly by condoning meat-eating among affluent people who do not need meat, especially when it has been cruelly and unsustainably factory-farmed. Surely such meat-eating runs counter to the values NI aspires to?

Rob Preston
Nottingham, UK

Neglected refugees

I am concerned that *The Dispossessed* (NI 223) makes no mention of the Cambodians. Their situation is in many respects a microcosm of the whole refugee scenario, with a combination of human rights abuses, lack of democracy and socio-economic factors which produced and continue to fuel the dual reality of people locked in camps, and an embargo which undermines Cambodia's capacity to develop.

The erosion of human rights

Clean slate

With reference to the letter from Martyn Rogers (*Letters* NI 223) I am pleased to report that Volkswagen AG and its subsidiaries, Audi AG and Seat, are not involved in the manufacture of trucks used for towing cruise missiles.

These vehicles are produced by MAN AG, an entirely separate company from Volkswagen AG, which is based in Munich. Although Volkswagen does supply some components to MAN AG, these are for the smallest vehicle in the MAN range, which has no military applications. The largest vehicle in the Volkswagen commercial vehicle range is a five-ton parcel van.

Edward Rowe
Audi Public Relations Manager,
VAG UK, Milton Keynes, UK



of refugees on the Thai-Cambodian border is both cynical and repulsive. And while refugees are still held in closed camps, facing the danger of being forcibly relocated, Khmer Rouge leaders are now scheduled to fly back to Phnom Penh within the next few months.

Norah Niland
Dublin, Ireland

Missed out

Congratulations on your issue on *The Dispossessed* (NI 223). My only criticism is that the Council for Education in World Citizenship is not included in your list of campaigning organizations. We provide speakers for meetings, have local groups, support schools and teachers, have a library and produce many publications on refugees. Our address is: Seymour Mews House, Seymour Mews, London W1H 9PE.

Patricia Rogers
Head of the Council for Education in World
Citizenship, London, UK

Invisible women

This month's edition of NI (*The Dispossessed* NI 223) leaves the mists of invisibility continuing to swirl around women, even though *Change* has done much to publicize the particular problems facing half the world's refugees: women.

In 1985 we published, with the World University Service, *Shaming the World: the needs of women refugees* by Lucy Bonnerjea, complete with recommendations for further action with a vital amendment to the UN definition of refugee status to include persecution on the grounds of gender. *Change* exists to make women more visible, and we need responsible magazines like NI to move on from token paragraphs on women to recognize gender perspectives on every issue.

Rachel Wilson
Change, London, UK

Overwhelming fear

I am so disgusted with your issue *The Dispossessed* (NI 223). I quote: 'Most Western governments seem to be doing their best to extinguish the lamp of asylum'. I should hope

so. Europe and particularly the UK are much too densely populated. A continued influx of political refugees will lead in time to such a serious breakdown in law and order that nowhere on this planet will be safe to flee to. Then what will you do?

Edgar Webb
Fareham, UK

Political aid

Chris Brazier's magazine *Responding to Third World Disasters* (NI 222) skipped some crucial facts. Public and media interest over famine in Africa has waned because the drought-stricken countries on this continent are of little strategic interest to the West. Hence famine has taken a back seat on the West's political agenda, and Western governments use food as an economic and political tool.

Take Ethiopia, which for years received a trickle of economic aid because it had a Marxist-led regime and therefore was not considered a Western ally. Prior to the recent political upheavals there, Mengistu managed to introduce some market reforms in farming. Yet the international community offered no help.

Christian Adomako
London, UK

Intimacy needed

Anuradha Vittachi's article, *The myth of compassion fatigue* (NI 221) tackles an issue I have been trying to deal with for some time, both personally and professionally. The problem of giving is partly one of scale, and partly one of proximity. People 'gee-whiz' at big statistics which illustrate poverty and child mortality, without really grasping the reality. The suffering of a single child however is experienced as a tragedy.

Similarly, individuals are more likely to help someone they know personally than an anonymous person. Not fair. But true nevertheless.

Paul Wachtel
Head of Creative Services,
World Wide Fund For Nature, Gland,
Switzerland

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

L E T T E R F R O M I N D I A



Learning from the wisdom of sages

If the native peoples of India have such an idyllic way of life, why do they need outsiders to help them?

Mari Marcel Thekaekara considers the issues.

AN NI reader's complaint has been sent to me saying that I was portraying 'the classic cliché of the noble savage'. Let's be clear. My husband and I certainly are trying to promote literacy. We also try very hard not to romanticize the *adivasis* or indigenous people's way of life. However we believe that an intervention through our project is necessary to prevent the *adivasis* in this region from being decimated.

Our work – which includes teaching local people about their land rights – is frequently attacked by those who push for 'preserving the pristine purity of primitive people'. This is a quote from a former Minister for Tribal Welfare who declared publicly that he believed *adivasis* should be put into reservations *à la* America – pretty much as a nearly extinct species ought to be preserved, to create a museum for the rest of the world to enjoy.

Another visitor was appalled because many young *adivasis* who worked with us were clad in jeans and sneakers. This guest was disgusted by the 'modernization' process that had taken place since her visit in 1980. Then she had re-visited the *adivasi* hamlet she had first surveyed in 1970 and returned shaken and distraught because half the young people who ought to have been in their twenties and thirties had died – mostly of malnutrition.

Of course the *adivasis* must have access to education and modern amenities. But even as we try to introduce these people into twentieth century mainstream India, we recognize that the process of transition, inevitable though it is, contains all the elements of a monumental tragedy.

Had the *adivasis* been left undisturbed, their environment would have provided everything they needed to live comfortably. Now they are forced to change their ways, to come to terms with a lifestyle they don't even begin to comprehend. The rules are dictated by an alien culture.

Take land. The *adivasis* never saw the need to own land. Now an alien government decrees that people must possess pieces of paper to prove they own land they have lived on for centuries – a bit like B Traven's sailor whose very existence is questioned because he has lost his passport.

Of course *adivasis* must learn to read and write, but the reason behind their need for literacy is tragic; they must arm themselves with the weapons of 'civilization' which will otherwise destroy them. This happened to the American Indians in the US, to Aboriginal people in Australia and South America, and all over Asia where indigenous people are victimized.

The same process is also happening in housing. A Moolukurumba house is a beautiful piece of architecture. Made of mud, bamboo and tim-

ber it is invitingly cool during the hot summer and warm and welcoming during the winter. Yet the people are clamouring for the ugly, concrete box-like structures that the government gives them. Modernity implies status of a sort. And the grasses and timber used to build traditional dwellings are less available since forests have shrunk. In one village the juxtaposition of mod-



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

ern and traditional houses is startlingly jarring.

A well-constructed modern house would be a blessing for any family. But tribal people are exchanging beautiful, graceful houses for sub-standard monstrosities. This is tragic. Our struggle is to find viable alternatives which combine the best of both worlds. Not an easy task to be sure.

In the course of it we must take care not to adopt the role of *messiahs* and conclude that we have all the answers. Our challenge is to continue the questioning process and know when to learn. Especially by listening, really listening to the people. Ordinary people everywhere can display enormous elemental wisdom.

Years ago an old West Virginian farmer in the US said to me: 'If Russia dropped an atom bomb here, there'd be nothing but charred earth. Any farmer can tell you that such earth would be no darned good to anyone, man nor beast. So why do their government and ours continue making bombs? Instead they could try to feed the poor in their countries. There's a lot of poor kids in West Virginia, I can tell you.'

Old Eddie Gillenwater will never be nominated for the Nobel Peace prize. He was apologetic about his lack of education and that he couldn't 'talk fancy', as he explained to me. But statesmen and scholars could learn a thing or two from him, just as they could learn from the tribespeople. Which is the point I was trying to make in the first place. ■

Mari Marcel Thekaekara has been working for the last seven years on a project she and her husband started for native people in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Hidden History

Columbus & the colonial legacy



'In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.' Wayne Ellwood explores the myth of discovery and looks at the famous mariner's impact on the land and people of the Americas.

ON a fine summer's day the twin spires of the Martyr's Shrine are clearly etched against a cobalt blue sky. The solid stone church, hewn from cold granite, has a commanding view of the rich farmland to the south and, just barely visible to the north, the shining silver lip of Georgian Bay on Lake Huron – one of the largest of North America's Great Lakes.

Lake Huron is named after the indigenous people that used to inhabit this region of southern Ontario. Early French fur traders gave them the name Huron, though

they called themselves the Wendat.

A century after Christopher Columbus sailed into the Caribbean, the Wendat were still a thriving nation of 30,000 people, largely untouched by the expanding legions of white Europeans probing the continent for wealth. They grew corn, beans and squash in the fertile alluvial soil, and lived in bark-covered longhouses in small tribal communities. Their lives were tuned to the cyclical rhythm of the seasons; as with most native people the physical and the spiritual world were one.

Today the Wendat are gone, though archeologists continue to poke and prod the woods and fields of Huronia for remnants of their culture. Yet you can still catch a glimpse of their lives by wandering across the highway from the church to see 'Ste Marie Among the Hurons' – an astonishingly detailed, historical reconstruction of an early Christian mission run by French Jesuits. Fresh-faced college students in period costume re-enact life on the mission; men and women from a nearby Ojibway reserve take the part of the Huron.



S RICKY ROGERS

A Bolivian Indian is fingerprinted in the streets of La Paz. Indians in Latin America are still seen as racially inferior.

The Ste Marie mission thrived for barely ten years, from 1640 to 1650, an outpost of Christianity in the middle of the Canadian wilderness, nearly 4,000 miles from Paris. At its peak 60 Europeans lived there including 23 priests – known to the Wendat as the ‘black robes’. By the time the Jesuits left, the Huron people had virtually disappeared.

What happened? Trading rivalries, stirred up by British and Dutch traders to the south, set in motion a deadly assault on Huron villages by other Indian groups, members of the Iroquois League. In March, 1649 a thousand Mohawk and Seneca warriors attacked the Huron. Two Jesuit priests were killed and eventually a shrine above the old mission of Ste Marie was built. Nearly 10,000 Huron, along with a handful of priests, took refuge on an island in Georgian Bay – known today as Christian Island. By spring, starvation, disease and cold had reduced their numbers to fewer than 300 people.¹

The Huron tragedy is one small footnote in the history of the Americas that has unfolded over the last 500 years. Unfortunately, the ingredients are all too familiar: commerce, Christianity, racism, disease and death. The Jesuits at Ste Marie, like their Spanish predecessors farther

south, were men of their time. Both were steeped in the twisted religiosity and arrogance of the mediaeval Church. And both believed in the ‘doctrine of discovery’ which was to undergird the centuries of imperial expansion which followed. Europeans saw themselves at the apex of civilization; whatever European nation first ‘discovered’ another land had the right to colonize it, regardless of the people who lived there.

Hungry for gold

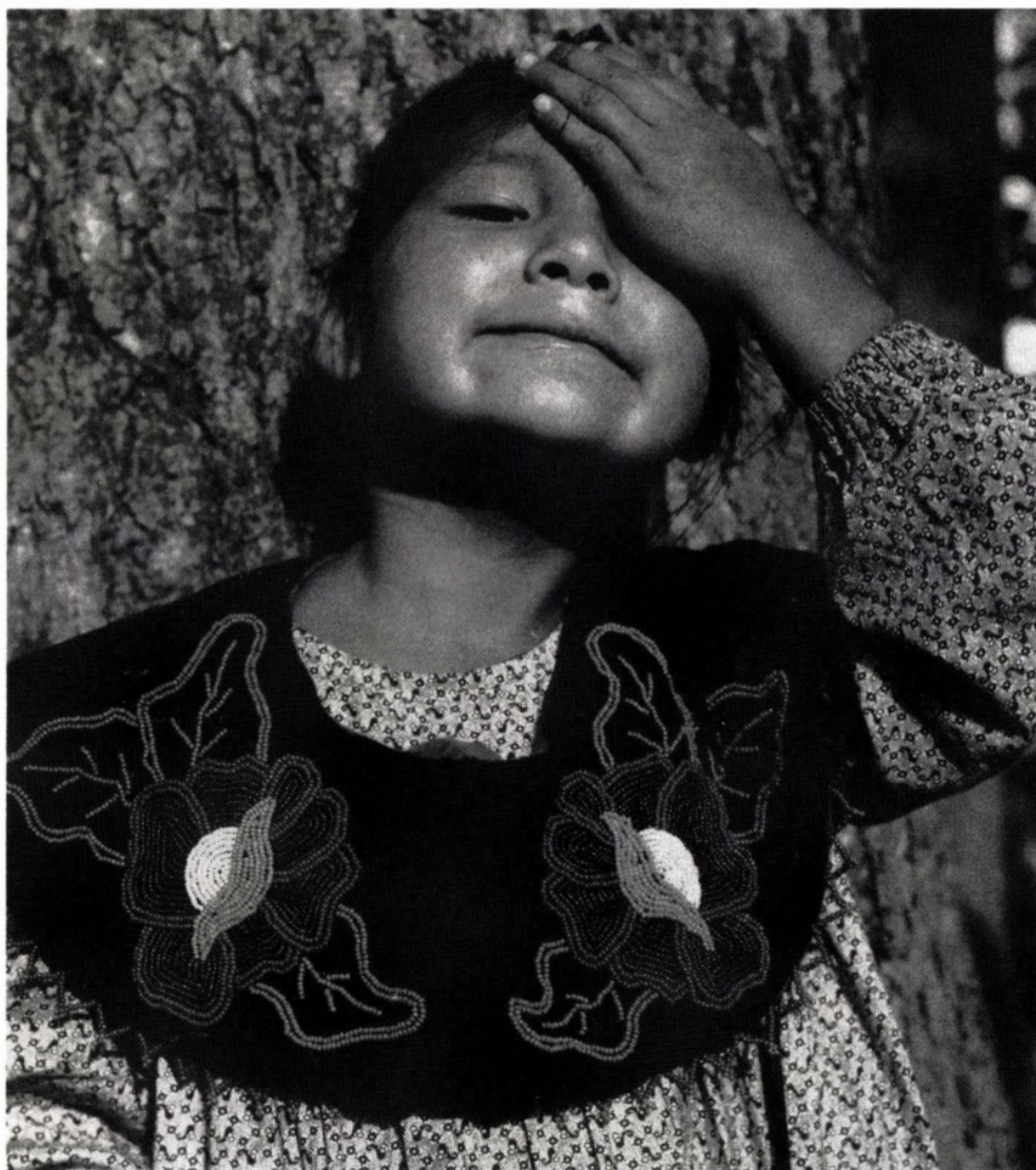
Within months of Columbus’ first landfall in the ‘new world’ Pope Alexander VI issued a Papal edict stating: ‘The Catholic faith and Christian religion, especially in our times shall be exalted, broadened and spread in every part of the world, salvation shall be sought for all souls, barbarian nations shall be subdued and led back to the faith.’

For the gold-hungry Spaniards this divine command quickly became a rationale for centuries of barbaric treatment of native Americans. Columbus himself set the stage on the island of Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic), the site of his first settlement. By his second voyage, in 1495, he was desperate for gold to repay the Spanish bankers who were

financing him. Columbus refused to believe there was almost no gold on the island; instead he forced the island’s Taino inhabitants to bring him a ‘hawk’s bell’ full of gold dust every three months. The natives were made to wear a copper disc around their necks to prove they’d paid their tribute. Those caught without a disc had their arms hacked off, or were murdered outright.²

The *conquistadors* who followed Columbus were driven by the same frenzied greed. When Hernando Cortés met the Aztec ambassadors of the great lord Moctezuma in 1519 he was dazzled by the gold jewellery that adorned their bodies. ‘Send me some of it,’ the Spaniard ordered, ‘because I and my companions suffer from a disease of the heart which can be cured only with gold.’ – an apt description of the spiritual vacuum at the centre of the European soul.³ Several months later, when the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan had been captured, nearly a quarter of a million Aztec warriors lay dead.

Thirty years later the Catholic priest, Bartolomé de Las Casas, wrote his famous *Brief History of the Destruction of the Indies*, in which he graphically described the depredations of the Spanish fortune seekers. The Spaniards hurled themselves



GREG STAATS/JANE CORKIN GALLERY

A young Mohawk girl caught in a pensive moment:
'Without the land our spirits will die.'

on the Indians 'like wolves after days of starvation', he wrote. 'For 40 years they have done nothing but torture, murder, harass, afflict torment and destroy them with extraordinary, incredible, innovative and previously unheard of cruelty ... Some natives they hung on gibbets, and it was their reverential custom to gather at a time sufficient victims to hang 13 in a row, and thus piously to commemorate Christ and the 12 Apostles.'

Las Casas estimated that 50 million Indians perished in Latin America and the Caribbean within 50 years of Columbus' landing. Scholars now reckon that 90 per cent of the indigenous population of the Americas was wiped out in a century and a half – the greatest demographic collapse in the history of the planet and the proportional equivalent of nearly half a billion people today.

Much of that death and destruction was caused by illness. The people of the Americas had little resistance to old-world diseases like influenza, measles and small-

pox. These imported pathogens cut a swath across the land, decimating whole Indian nations, often before the Europeans reached them. The *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, written during the Spanish invasion by one of the largest Maya groups in Guatemala, capture the terror of the times:

'Great was the stench of the dead ... After our fathers and grandfathers succumbed, half of the people fled to the fields. The dogs and the vultures devoured the bodies. The mortality was terrible. Your grandfathers died, and with them died the son of the king and his brothers and kinsmen ... oh, my sons! We were born to die!'⁴

Las Casas argued passionately that the Indians had souls like the Spaniards and should be treated with respect. But to no avail. The ideology of racial superiority was already firmly in place. Native people were damned outside the Christian faith, a point which was emphasized in the infamous *requirimiento* of the Spanish Crown. The Indians were given a choice: accept the Christian god willingly or face the conse-

quences. The *conquistador*, Gonzalo de Alvarado, sent an abridged version to the Maya leader Kaibil Balam before attacking:

'Let it be known that our coming is beneficial ... because we bring tidings of the true God and Christian Religion sent by the Pope – the Vicar of Jesus Christ, God and Man – and the Emperor King of Spain, so that you may become Christians peacefully of your own free will; but should you refuse the peace we offer, then the death and destruction that follow will be entirely of your own account.'⁵

Having demonized native people as a 'dark force' living outside the norms of civilization it was a simple step to apply the same label to black Africans. Columbus himself was a great advocate of slavery, and crammed 500 Taino people into a ship on his second voyage home. Later he proposed in a letter to the Spanish Queen Isabella: 'The savage and cannibalistic Caribs should be exchanged as slaves against livestock to be provided by merchants in Spain.'

Slaves were soon captured from the West coast of Africa to replace the fast-dying native Americans: 4,000 were sold in Cuba and Hispaniola in 1517. The trade quickly took off as the demand for cheap agricultural labour increased in the new colonies of Brazil and Jamaica. Hundreds of boats crossed the Atlantic, disgorging their human cargoes in the ports of Kingston, Havana and later, Charleston, in North Carolina. The history of the slave trade is now well documented. And though the numbers can't convey the cruelty and suffering, they bear repeating – just as the horror of the Nazi Holocaust should be studied anew by every generation.

Ideology of racism

The Atlantic slave trade lasted nearly 400 years during which time 15 million Africans were shipped to the Americas. Conditions during the crossing were so horrific that between a half and a third of the African captives died on route. Of the rest, most died within a decade of their arrival in the strange new land. By the time slavery was officially abolished in the late 1800s, one in four Africans was a slave.

Black Africans and indigenous Americans were yoked together as subhuman savages who could join the expanding Christian world – or be swept aside. The French priest, Father Dutertre, neatly summed up the dominant view of slavery in the 17th century: 'Their servitude,' he wrote, 'is the principle of their happiness and their disgrace is the cause of their salvation.'⁶

Thus the ideology of racism was legitimized by the teachings of the Church. Both blacks and native people could be abused and exploited in the pursuit of

wealth without moral qualm.

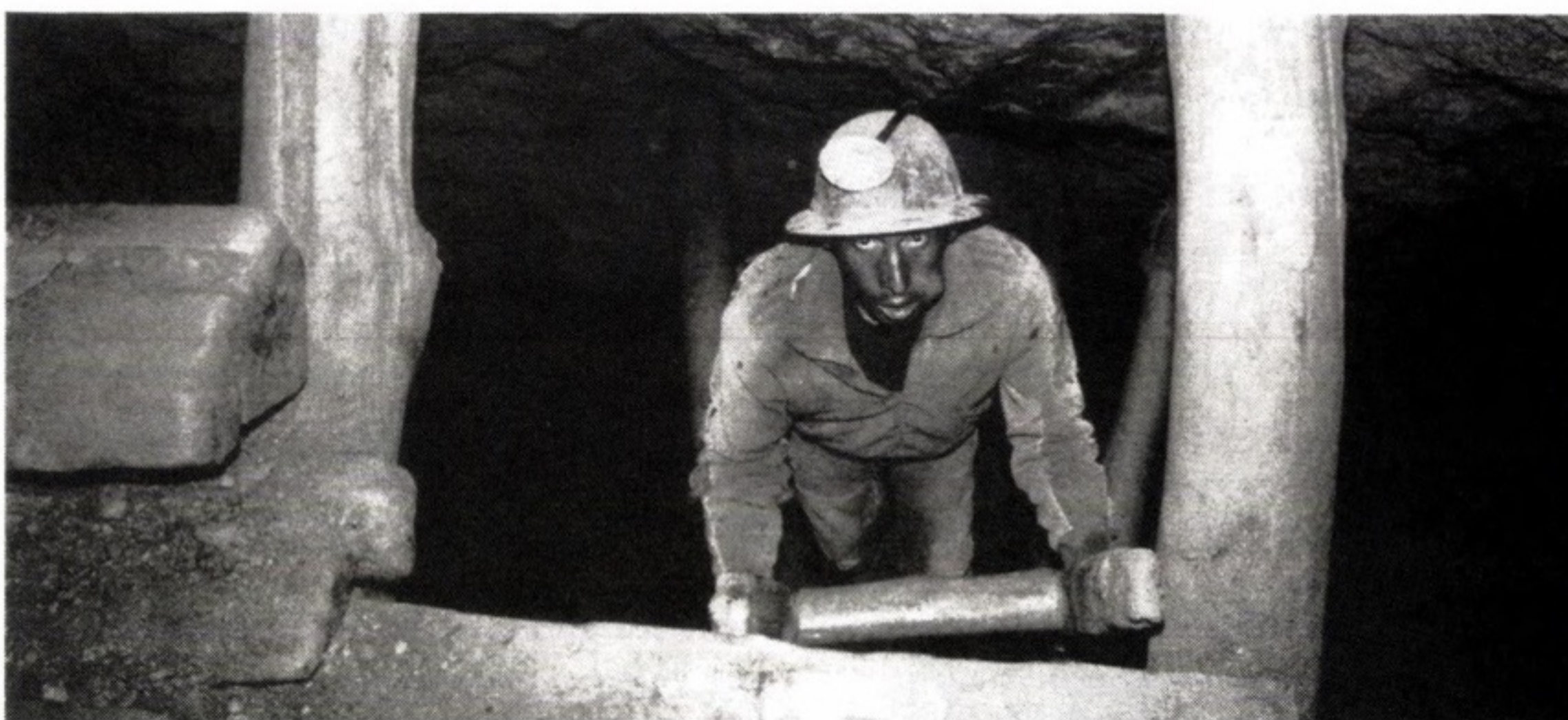
In their self-righteous desire to control the natives and subdue the vast wilderness, the Spanish – and later the French and English – attempted to rebuild Europe in the Americas. Aztec and Mayan temples were destroyed and their stones used to build the churches and cathedrals of the conquerors. It was inevitable that the destruction of Indian nations soon turned to the destruction of the natural environment. But what was it about this boundless, 'new land' and the 'pagan practises' of native Americans that caused Europeans to react with agitation and revulsion?

A clue lies in the ancient earth-based spirituality that native Americans practised and which Europeans looked at with both fear and longing. For Indian people the natural world was inseparable from the spiritual world. Time was circular, like the great Aztec calendar, and myth was as palpable as the rocks or the trees. All nature was a cathedral.

The American historian Frederick Turner argues convincingly that Indian spirituality was feared precisely because it was so appealing to European Christians whose own myths of meaning had been gutted by the Church:

'In the same way that civilized men (sic) had cleared the earth, pruned back the forests, planted villages, towns and cities, so had Christianity stripped its world of magic and mystery, and of the possibility of spiritual renewal through itself. In cutting down the sacred trees in the mystic groves, in building its sanctuaries on the rubble of the chthonic shrines, and in branding all vestiges of ancient mythic practises [as] vain, impious and superstitious, the Church had effectively removed divinity from its world... its people [became] alienated sojourners in a spiritually barren world where the only outlet for the urge to life was the restless drive onward ...'³

Black nanny and her white charge in Panama City: poorest of the poor.



FERDINANDO SCIANNAN/MAGNUM

Coca-chewing miner in the Andes: after five centuries the mineral wealth of Latin America still goes to the benefit of outsiders.

The natural world became a satanic place of dark menace for the Europeans, an environment to be tamed and remade in the service of human progress. The natives on the other hand were lost to 'the ooze of night and nature from which Christian history had redeemed itself.' The only option, Turner says, 'was to take possession without becoming possessed: to take secure hold on the lands beyond and yet hold them at a rigidly maintained spiritual distance.'

Modern pirates

This the colonizing Europeans did with vengeance. From Columbus to the present day the natural wealth of the Americas has been plundered, wildlife exterminated and the land, water and air poisoned. In the United States alone more than 140 major animal and bird species have become extinct since 1492.⁷ And still the essential environmental message of Indian people remains to be heard:

'Without [the land and animals] our spirits will die. Non-natives sometimes think we are being romantic when we talk about these things. This is not about romance. This is reality and survival,' says Norma Kassi from the Gwich'in Nation in the Canadian Yukon.⁸

Today the single-minded greed of the *conquistadors* has been replaced by the bloodless 'bottom line' of corporate accountants. Multinational corporations have become the modern-day pirates, working hand-in-hand with the nation states that now occupy the lands of the Kayapo and the Apaché.

Whether it is timber on the land of the Gitksan-Wetsuwetan in British Columbia, or oil on the land of the Huarani in Ecuador, the rights of native Americans are still being trampled. Today, not a single country in the Americas recognizes native people as distinct nations with the right to self-government.

Nor has the other main legacy of the

Columbus venture been dismantled. The ideology of racism continues to scar social relations and harmony in the Americas, from Chile to Canada. Afro-Americans and other people of colour are amongst the very poorest, with sky-high unemployment, decrepit housing, inadequate health care and crippling rates of alcoholism and disease. In the US, home of the 'New World Order', 43 per cent of all black children are born into poverty and the only stable jobs for young black men are in the army. Yet across the Americas these same people are being called upon to celebrate the anniversary of Columbus.

* * *

October 12, 1992 marks the 500th anniversary of what author Kirkpatrick Sale calls the beginning of 'the European conquest of the world'. By the time next year has passed most of us will know more than we cared, or wanted to know, about Christopher Columbus, the middle-aged Italian sailor whose haphazard voyage across the Atlantic set in motion the colonial era.

But there are other lessons about which we will have a great deal to learn. The legacy of Christopher Columbus is still with us – the process of colonization and dispossession is still underway. But the hidden history of two continents is only slowly emerging. And the real 'discovery' of the Americas has yet to take place. ■

1 'The Jesuits and the Fur Trade' by Bruce Trigger, from *Sweet Promises* ed. JR Miller (University of Toronto Press, 1991). 2 *Columbus: His Enterprise, Exploding the Myth*, Hans Koning (Monthly Review Press/LAB, 1991). 3 *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness*, Frederick Turner (Rutgers University Press, 1983). 4 *Central America: A Nation Divided*, RL Woodward (Oxford University Press, 1985). 5 George W Lovell, cited in *Time Among the Maya*, Ronald Wright (Penguin Books, 1990). 6 'The Voice of the Victims', by Laennec Hurbon, *Concilium*, 1492-1992. 7 *The Conquest of Paradise*, Kirkpatrick Sale (Knopf, 1990). 8 'On the Land Forever', speech to the *First Interamerican Congress of Indigenous Peoples on Management and Conservation of Natural Resources*, Panama City, 1989.

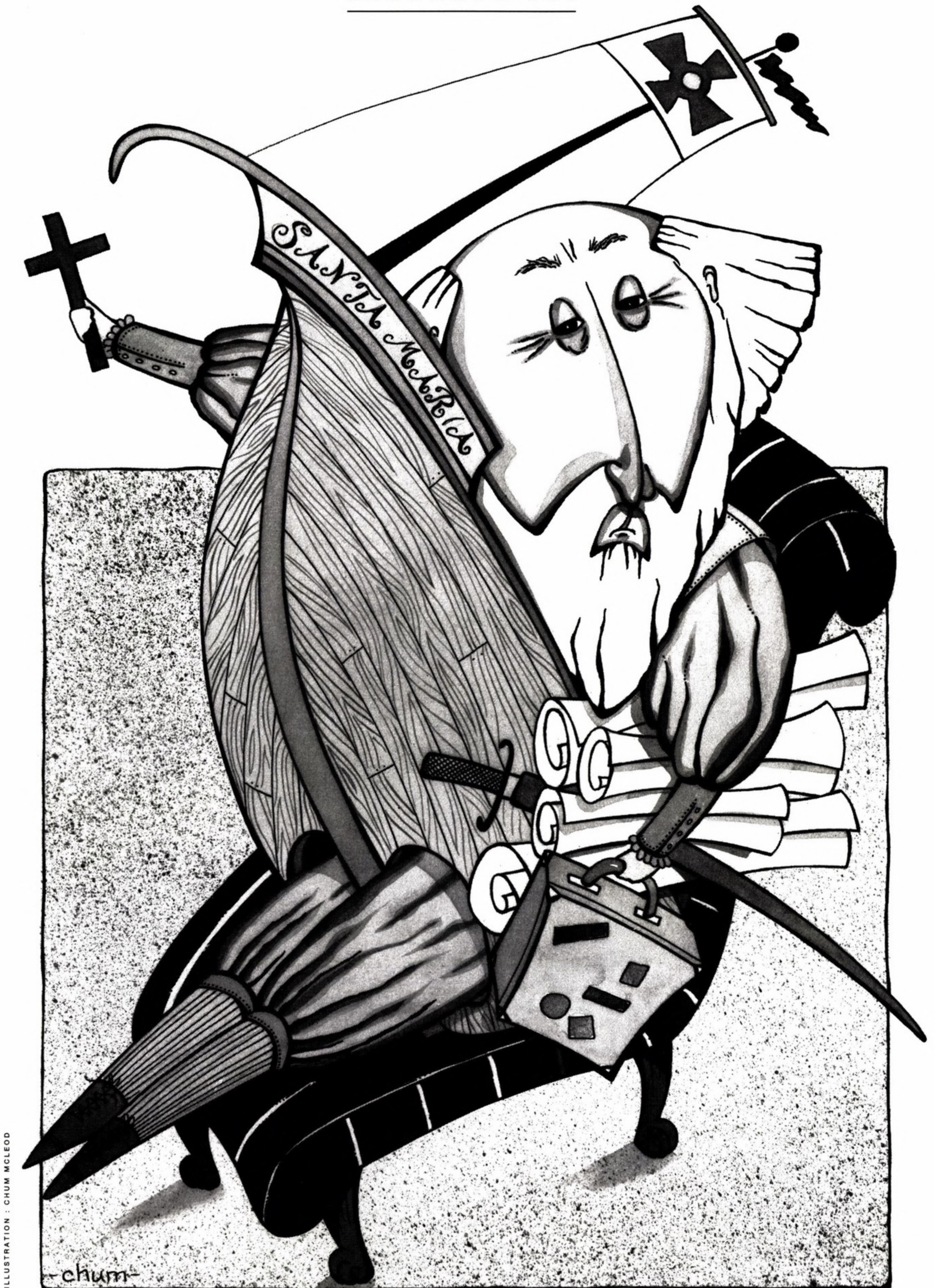


ILLUSTRATION : CHUM MCLEOD

Columbus on the couch

Rummaging through dusty archives, historian Kirkpatrick Sale unearthed the following rare document. A psychiatric case study of Christopher Columbus by 15th century doctor Sigmundo Feliz, based on clinical observations and the famous mariner's own writings.

Case: 1492

Patient: Cristobal C

*Occupation: Admiral of the Ocean Sea,
one-time colonial governor*

Date: May 1506

THIS represents one of my most regrettable cases, for despite my best endeavours I was too late to be of any substantial benefit to this patient, and he died shortly after our last visit, a bitter, sorrowful man, still a victim of the paranoia and melancholia that seems to have afflicted him most of his adult life. He was a victim too, in a more physical sense, of a congeries of ailments I diagnose as Reiter's Syndrome – that is arthritis, uveitis, and urethritis, serious inflammation of the joints, the eyes and the urinary tract, leading most often to incapacitating stiffness, retinal bleeding and dysmicturition, sometimes as well to mental instabilities of a general sort.

I was fortunate to have in addition to several lengthy visits with this patient in recent months, full access to his most intimate papers, including logs of his major voyages to the Indies, letters written by him to the court over some ten years, notebooks he assembled for King Fernando and our late Queen Isabel, and marginalia in the numerous books in his library. From these I have been able to arrive at a reasonably sound judgment as to his basic character traits, his obsessions and his general psychological makeup. Of these I have isolated four as the most determinant and the ones I believe most useful for later researchers.

1 *Aradixia:*

To be without roots, without a sense of home and place, is one of the most serious, though one of the least emphasized, psychological disorders. This patient suffered from this to an unusual degree. From what I have been able to discover, he had so little of that feeling we Spaniards call *querencia* – a love of home and a sense of inner well-being – that he could truly be called a man who never lived anywhere, who simply never had a home.

Late in his life, in a will, Cristobal C made one reference to having been born in

Genoa, but nowhere else in all his voluminous writings does he refer to this as his home town, nor does he mention growing up there, or his parents or family, or any of its sights or sounds. (When he wishes to make comparisons between New World phenomena and elsewhere, he always picks Castile: 'very high mountains, all resembling Castile', 'fish like those in Castile', etc). Nor does he ever write a word in Genoese, or Italian, nor refer to a single Italian scholar or artist, past or present. It is

"I saw two or three villages and their people came down to the beach calling to us and offering thanks to God. Some brought us water, others food...but should your majesties command it, all inhabitants could be taken away to Castile, or made slaves on the island; with 50 men we could subjugate them all and make them do what we want."

COLUMBUS IN HIS REPORT TO THE
SPANISH CROWN AFTER HIS FIRST
VOYAGE TO THE AMERICAS

as if, supposing this indeed to be his place of birth, he has chosen to eradicate it – and significantly, his parents – from his mind, a psychosis the effects of which are well recorded in the literature.

After his place of birth, the patient never once seems to have found a fixed abode for any length of time. His only real home, from his accounts, was on the deck of a ship, any ship, though one could hardly call the inconstant and ever-changing sea

a psychologically fit 'home'. His only real wish, even then, was to go sailing to a different part of it, always somewhere else beyond the horizon.

As to family ties, those were similarly negligible. His only refer-

ence ever to his parents was a phrase in one will about praying 'to the souls of my father and mother'. His wife in Portugal is never mentioned in his writings and we do not know the date of his marriage or of its issue, his son Diego. His mistress in Cordova, by whom he had a second son, Fernando, is mentioned but once, in his last will, and nowhere are there any love letters or poems or memorabilia of this deep attachment, though from other writings we see he was a passionate man. I have encountered this stubborn resistance to acknowledging family in other patients, and though it ranges in degrees from a simple kind of forgetfulness to a full-blown blacking-out of a painful past, it is never healthy.

Lastly, I might mention the partiality that the patient seems to have had to several different names over the years – Colombo, Colomo, Colom, Colon – and yet he refers to himself by name only once in all his writings, and when it comes to signing his name he never uses the last name at all, choosing to use only his first name (as a lord or king might), or his title.

2 *Pseudologia:*

Bending truth to suit unusual circumstances is a normal enough trait, but a persistent habit of equivocation and misrepresentation, while not necessarily pathological, is certainly dysfunctional – in some cases indicative of full-fledged disorders. This patient appears from all my evidence to be someone who found it difficult, even in non-threatening circumstances, to tell the truth, a habit of delusion that at times developed into self-delusion.

For example, it seems that he chose to keep what some have called a 'false log' on

the first voyage of discovery, to record for the crew different distances made at sea from the true ones. If it was a written log it would have been entirely useless, a real sign of self-delusion since the crew could certainly not read, and if it was rather some oral presentation it would have been entirely counterproductive, since it gave the mileage each day as less than the real distance when of course the crew would want to be reassured that they were going faster to their destination. Why the deception? It seems simply to have been in the man's character, something he had to do, its utility aside.

For another example – among many, I am constrained to say – there is the curious incident in 1494 in which the patient made his entire crew swear, to a notary public in an official document and with a punishment of 'the cutting out of the tongue' if anyone should deny it, that the island along which they had been sailing, Cuba, was actually part of some unspecified mainland. True, the man seems to have been in a predicament, since he had declared to the Sovereigns that he would find a mainland on this second voyage to the Indies and so far he had only found islands, and impoverished ones at that. But still – he might have had the men agree informally to that tale, and anyway should have known that the King and Queen wouldn't take the word of a million seamen without some further proof of there being a mainland there.

The deceptions and self-deceptions are so recurrent in the man's career that we

A 15th century woodcut shows Columbus arriving in the 'new world', with the names on the map already in place.



An impressionistic sketch of Hispaniola, thought to have been drawn by Columbus shortly after his first voyage.

must reckon duplicity is a central part of his character. It is almost as if he had an imperfect understanding of truth and falsehood, or didn't care so long as one or the other served his purposes – but more, as if the one were as real, as true as the other. That way, as we know from our work, madness lies.

3 Monomania:

Although the obsessive drives that characterized the patient's life were tripartite in nature – we might traditionally put them as God, gold and glory – cynically we may regard them as exhibiting this singular psychosis.

If any further proof of Cristobal C's preoccupation with God were necessary other than his fulsome letters, I have seen his *Book of Prophecies* and it is one of the strangest, most unsettling documents in patient lore that I have come across. Not only is it a jumble of Biblical and canonical quotations designed to prove that the patient had a holy mission to proselytize the world and reconquer Jerusalem – 'He made me the messenger thereof and showed me where to go' – but it is shot through with a wild millenarianism of such uncanny precision that it figures the end of the world exactly 155 years into the future. The book reveals a conviction of divine purpose ('In this voyage to the Indies the Lord wished to perform a very evident miracle') that suggests all-out dementia.

As to gold, one has only to read the log of the first voyage, where the search – or permit me to call it the lust – for treasure is patent on every page. I troubled myself to count: there are 16 references to gold, some quite lengthy, during the first two weeks in the islands, another 13 in the next month, and then finally 46 references in the next five weeks. (The Spanish word *oro* is used 140 times in all – though he brought back only a few small nuggets and pieces of jewellery in the end). Later on he is even more revealing: 'Gold is most excellent,' he said on his final voyage, and 'whoever has it may do what he wishes in the world.'

And glory, this mania of an entirely personal kind: the patient, though in failing health, managed to compile 44 lengthy documents into a book for the Sovereigns in which he presented evidence for his claims to titles, rewards, benefits and revenues from the crown far in excess of anything they were prepared to offer. The fact of such a notebook, which might be presumed a true effrontery to Catholic royalty, is amazing enough evidence to compulsion. But the tone of martyrdom and victimization ('Had I despoiled the Indies... and given it to the Moors, I could have been shown no greater enmity in Spain.') bespeaks an almost total misunderstanding of the patient's true relationship in the royal schema, indeed in the world at large.

4 Phrenitis:

Finally, I must draw attention to a psychotic trait that can only be described as phrenitis – repeated delusions that occur with such intensity that they raise serious questions about how we are to regard his general sanity in the rest of his life. Moreover, the fact that he himself recorded these with perfect straightforwardness, and without shame – and indeed presented them in writing to the notoriously cold-blooded Sovereigns – suggests that he must have regarded such episodes as 'normal'. That is to say, he must have fairly well lost that ability to distinguish the normal from the abnormal that is one of the hallmarks of *compos mentis*.

Take, for example, the discovery of 'Earthly Paradise' reported on his third voyage – no, I am not making this up – and presented in a straight, sober letter to their majesties: 'I am completely persuaded in my own mind that the Terrestrial Paradise is in the place I have said,' where the earth 'has the shape of a pear, which is all very round, except at the stem, where it is very prominent, or that it is as if one had a very round ball, and on one part of it was placed something like a woman's nipple, and that this part with the stem is the highest and nearest to the sky, below the equinoctial line and in this Ocean Sea at the end of the

East.' And 'all men say that Paradise is at the end of the East, and that it is.'

Angels and Paradise on a nipple: the patient truly seems to believe in these things, truly seems to see himself as a prime agent in them. It cannot be called incoherence, for the writing is too firm and deliberate for that, but it must be regarded clinically as some form of phrenitis, or paraphrenitis, and at rather an advanced stage.

Luckily, perhaps, the death of the patient has saved me from having to make a full diagnosis of his ailment and from having to prescribe some sort of therapeutic regimen that might enable him to settle comfortably into ordinary quotidian society. I certainly would find it most challenging to do either.

But I am moved to reflect upon the character of this patient, for it strikes me as very significant that this is a man who has braved many great dangers, travelled great distances, faced up to great challenges, and achieved great discoveries, and none can take that away from him. What are we to make of the fact that it seems to take a person with the abnormal character traits of Cristobal C to accomplish all that? What does it mean that the most momentous achievement of our age was rendered by a person distorted by several afflictions, any one of which might be regarded as a functionally disabling mental illness? What does it say about the nature of such achievements, about 'discovery' itself or even the desire of individuals and societies to strive for them? What is it about our culture, our cherished European civilization, that it needs to breed and put forth such people in order to find its salvation in the new, the far-off, the other, the elsewhere? Could madness be the hallmark of our achievers, our progress, our very civilization?

This much at least we can conclude. It has been said that the world owes all its outward impulses, its conquering of space and species, to men ill at ease, while the happy man inevitably confines himself within ancient limits and possibilities. Whatever else, Cristobal C was not a happy man – indeed, more ill at ease in a dark psychotic way than most around – and it might be argued that he represented supremely what was not a happy culture. ■



Sigmundo Feliz
Valladolid, Spain

Kirkpatrick Sale is an American environmentalist and author of *The Conquest of Paradise*.

Columbus

A brief biography

Name: Cristoforo Colombo (Italian). Also known as Cristobal Colon (Spanish) and Christopher Columbus (English); (Cristoforo = Christ-bearer)

Born: Genoa, Italy, 1451.

Died: Valladolid, Spain, 1506.

Married: Felipa Perestrello Moniz, 1480; one son, Diego, born 1482.



Background: Not much known of his early years. Son of a middle-class weaver; self-educated, ambitious. First sailed as a merchant's clerk, later as a trader on Portuguese ships visiting England, Ireland, and the Azores - as well as the Guinea Coast of Africa where the Portuguese had already set up trading posts.

Skills: Learned mathematics, astronomy and several languages (Latin, Portuguese and Spanish) on his own. Sailing and navigation training on the job. Persuasive talker.

Beliefs: A fervent Catholic and strong monarchist.

Goals: To find a Western sea route to China; to find gold for himself and for the Spanish Crown; and to spread Christian values to the 'dark areas' of the globe.

The Voyages: Columbus made four voyages in total. In return for three ships and enough money for a crew and supplies he demanded 10 per cent of all riches found, an Admiralty over the Western Ocean and the governorship of any newly-found land. That he got to the Caribbean at all was the result of a serious navigation error. He miscalculated the distance from Spain to Cipangu (Japan) at 2,400 nautical miles rather than 10,000.

First Voyage: October 12, 1492 – Landed on a tiny island in the Bahamas (historians argue over which one) five weeks after leaving the Canary Islands off the African coast. Then sailed to Cuba and finally Hispaniola (the island shared today by Haiti and the Dominican Republic). First settlement, 'Natividad', built in Hispaniola. Returned home with a handful of gold trinkets and six Taino Indians whom he presented to the Spanish court.

Subsequent Voyages: September, 1493; May, 1498; May, 1502 – Meandered around the Caribbean capturing slaves and extorting meagre quantities of gold from the Indians. Landed at Trinidad, Panama, Jamaica, Venezuela, Dominica and several other smaller islands.



LARRY TOWELL/MAGNUM

Guatemala's killing fields

The Indian majority in Guatemala is still being slaughtered five centuries after the Spanish invasion. Bob Carty reports on the resistance that never stopped.

TWICE a week the tourists arrive. They pour out of buses, cameras ready, and surge through the town of Chichicastenango ('Chichi' for short) in the highlands three hours west of Guatemala City. On market days, Chichi's plaza is crowded with 10,000 Mayan Indians wearing a riot of colour – purples, reds and blues – woven into dresses, pants, shawls and blouses.

Some tourists stride up the steps of Saint Thomas church, ignoring the signs asking non-Mayans to keep out. They snap pictures of native men who look away in silence. The men carry tin pots that smoke with the incense of tree resins burning on hot coals. Each Mayan watches how straight his smoke rises, to see if he is sincere enough to communicate from his heart on earth to the heart of the Mayan sky.

Inside the church a Catholic mass is said at the altar. Down the centre aisle are rows of candles on the floor and in the thick smoke Mayan women kneel on palm mats, leaving behind them bunches of flowers and herbs when they go.

For the tourists it's wonderfully quaint and exotic. Most have no idea that Chichi is the gateway to Guatemala's 'killing fields'. The hills around town are littered with mass graves which Guatemalan and Argentine forensic doctors began to exhume last July. There are reports of 233 such graves throughout the country. North from Chichi, the province of El Quiché stretches into mountains where soldiers rule with terror and bodies appear on roadsides showing horrible signs of torture and mutilation.

There's little enthusiasm for the

Columbus Quincentennial celebrations in Chichicastenango. 'Here we will not celebrate the 500 years,' says a local Catholic priest, himself a Mayan who asked to be unnamed. 'It was a massacre and we will mourn it. And we will remember that the massacre, the conquest, continues to this day.'

Mass murders

The original massacre began in 1524. The conquistador Pedro Alvarado (alternatively described by historians as a 'terrorist gangster' and 'slave-hunter') arrived in Guatemala and found a politically and geographically decentralized Mayan civilization speaking at least 22 different dialects. Conquest was more than a matter of simply beheading the top indigenous leaders. Instead, Alvarado decided to exterminate

the civilian population as well, a practice yet to be abandoned.

He directed eight major massacres, killing up to 3,000 Indians at a time. Mayan chiefs were incinerated alive as Catholic priests burned Mayan historical records. Alvarado rewarded his soldiers with the right to enslave the survivors. Mayan lands were appropriated, the people herded into towns and forced to work the Spanish estates.

Even now a Mayan commonly works three months as a migrant plantation worker in the sugar or cotton plantations of the Pacific coast (the other nine months are spent as a subsistence farmer).

Today 60 per cent of Guatemala's nine million people are Indian. And nearly two-thirds of Mayan children are malnourished. In the early 1980s, Dr Moises Beher, head of the UN's Institute for Nutrition in Central America, said the Mayan people were better fed before the arrival of Alvarado nearly 500 years ago than they are today.

Pagan beliefs

For the Maya, 1992 is a chance to expose the history of brutality which they've endured, and to correct the myth of the stoic native who is passive in the face of oppression. In fact, there were a dozen armed uprisings in the 18th and 19th centuries. 'There was so much resistance that there were rivers of blood,' says Daniel Matul, a leader of the International Maya League. Matul now lives in Costa Rica since his three brothers – teachers like himself – were assassinated by the Guatemalan army.

According to Matul, the Maya recognized they could not defeat the *conquistadors* in battle. So they hid their political leaders and elders in the mountains to preserve their way of life.

In Chichicastenango, church and military authorities worked together to erase what they considered to be pagan beliefs. They built Saint Thomas Church on top of a Mayan temple, but the Indians still came with incense and herbs to honour their ancestors' gods.

The temple buried beneath the church in Chichi was originally built for Hun Ahpu, one of the most important figures in Mayan history. Today, although many Christian beliefs have been absorbed by the Maya, in Chichicastenango they still worship the way their ancestors did. 'We refuse to be assimilated,' says Daniel Matul.

That determination is visible everywhere – from the traditional *huipil* blouses worn by Mayan women to the flourishing Mayan languages, many of which are now being recorded in writing. There are invisible forms of resistance too: clandestine political and religious structures at the village level,

and secret training of Mayan priests. Matul says this adamant refusal to knuckle under is one reason for so much repression in Guatemala. 'They kill us because we are not assimilated,' says Matul. 'Because we have never been conquered.'

Among the *ladino* (people of mixed Spanish and Indian blood) and the Spanish elite, Mayan defiance generates a savage paranoia. The aristocracy is afraid of a Guatemala run by Mayans.

'They know our values are still alive,' says Daniel Matul. 'If we had political power these values would flower throughout the land. Spanish would not be the official language. We would seek economic development for everyone. The land would be a communal possession, not private property. That's why they see us as a danger.'

The Guatemalan military and their wealthy supporters want to wipe out that threat forever. In 1982, former Defence Minister Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores declared: 'We must do away with the words "indigenous" or "Indian". Our mission requires the integration of all Guatemalans.'

Soldiers are so brutalized in their training (new recruits must kill small animals and drink the blood) that they obey orders to kill their own people as enemies. 'It is a totally racist state,' says Guatemalan anthropologist Carlos Sarti. 'The military operates as if this society is contaminated by foreigners that must be extirpated.'

In the early 1980s it was as if the *conquistador* Pedro Alvarado was back in power. All Mayans were seen as supporters of the guerrillas; the military set out to

destroy the people as well as their culture. Mayans were burned alive, babies murdered and women raped. The dictator Rios Montt wiped 440 Mayan villages off the face of the earth.

The government forced hundreds of thousands of Indians into so-called 'model villages', a tactic learned from the Americans in Vietnam. The villages are designed to dilute Mayan identity. Instead of scattered huts on plots of family land, people were crowded into rows of houses hundreds of miles from their homes, beside Mayan neighbours who spoke different dialects. They were forced to speak Spanish and attend churches run by American fundamentalists.

Those who escaped the military went into exile: 200,000 fled to Mexico. Others stripped off their traditional dress, shed their Indian identity and melted into the cities.

Hidden holocaust

It is easier to understand the cycle of repression and resistance inside Guatemala than to understand why the outside world has paid so little attention to this outrage. Guatemala has experienced more death squad killings than El Salvador, more disappearances than Argentina or Chile, more systematic use of torture, more burning of villages and more massacres than any other country in Latin America. So why does the country receive so little attention from the international community and media?

One reason is that freedom of expression is stifled inside Guatemala. Death threats are commonplace for working journalists – and they are routinely killed to prove the point. As a result many atrocities go unreported. A recent fact-finding report by the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists says the media has 'become the messenger for state terrorism'.

Another explanation is the low-profile of the United States. Although the US installed the current military in a 1954 CIA coup and later trained them in their repressive craft, Guatemala has remained low on the White House agenda. Consequently, the country attracts little attention in either the US or international press.

Many Guatemalans can't help but wonder if part of the lack of attention is rooted in racism. Bluntly: the majority of people being killed today in Guatemala are indigenous, not educated middle class people with communications skills and backgrounds with which North Americans and Europeans can identify. Like the tourists in Chichicastenango, outsiders see the quaint and the exotic, but often miss what is beneath and within. ■

Bob Carty is a Canadian journalist and radio producer based in San José, Costa Rica.

A Mayan procession on the steps of Saint Thomas Church in Chichicastenango.



Dictionary of the New World Order

Five hundred years of colonialism continues to haunt the world, bringing an endless stream of victors and victims. And, as Latin American author **Eduardo Galeano** discovered, it will take more than a change of vocabulary to change the system.

APARTHEID: System originating in South Africa, designed to prevent blacks from invading their own country. Democratically applied by the New Order to the poor of the world, irrespective of colour.

COLD WAR: Now over, new enemies needed. Anyone interested should contact the Pentagon, Washington DC or their local police station.



CARTOONS: JIM NEEDLE

CONSUMER SOCIETY: Vast container containing nothing. An invention of high scientific value, capable of suppressing real needs by profitably imposing artificial ones.

COSTS, CALCULATION OF: The estimated minimum cost of a US presidential campaign is \$40 million. In the southern countries, the cost of manufacturing a president is considerably reduced by the absence of taxes and the cheapness of labour.

CREATIVITY: An increasingly rare crime.

CULTURE, UNIVERSAL: Television.

EXCHANGE: A mechanism which allows poor countries to pay when they buy and also when they sell.

FLAG, OF THE NEW ORDER: Piece of cloth containing so many stars there is no longer room for the stripes. Japan and Germany are studying alternative designs.

FOREIGN DEBT: Debt contracted at birth by every Third World citizen to finance the club to beat them with.

GOVERNMENT: An institution specializing in the spread of poverty, which regularly meets with its counterparts to celebrate the results of its actions. The most recent Regional Conference on Poverty, which brought together the governments of Latin America, revealed that they had already succeeded in condemning to poverty 62 per cent of that region's population.

HISTORY: On October 12th, 1992 the New World Order celebrates its 500th birthday.



IDEOLOGIES, DEATH OF: An expression confirming the definitive extinction of all troublesome ideas, and of ideas in general.

IMPUNITY: A legal reward given for ter-

rorist actions, when they are carried out by the State.

LIFE, AMERICAN WAY OF: A lifestyle typical of the United States, where it is rarely practised.



MAP OF THE WORLD: A sea with two shores: to the north, few with plenty; to the south, plenty with little. The East, which has managed to stop being the East, wants to become the North, but at the gates of Paradise is a notice saying 'No Vacancies'.

MARKET: Place where the price of people and other goods is fixed.

MONETARY FREEDOM: A traditional Biblical reference to King Herod let loose at a children's party.

NATURE: A nearly extinct phenomena of which archaeologists have located certain vestiges.

NINJA TURTLES: Violent little creatures who fight Evil, aided by a magic potion called – like the dollar – green stuff.

POISON: A substance which currently pervades the air, the water, the sea and the soul.

POWER: The relationship of the North to the South. Also refers to the activities of those in the South who live, spend, and think as if they were from the North.

PRIVATIZATION: A transaction whereby the property of the Argentine state becomes the property of the Spanish state. Other examples (e.g. the property of the Canadian state becomes the property of the US state) may be substituted depending on circumstances.



TELEVISION: Dictatorship of the Single Image in force in all countries (see above, Universal culture). Bestows the freedom to watch the same images and listen to the same words. Unlike the extinct Dictatorship of the Single Party, the Dictatorship of the Single Image works for the happiness of humankind and the development of its intelligence.

TRADE, FREEDOM OF: Stupefying drug; banned in the rich countries and paradoxically sold by the rich countries to the poor countries.

WAR: Punishment meted out to southern countries when they attempt to increase their export prices. (Latest example: attack on Iraq which produced 150,000 'collateral losses', commonly known as human victims.)

WEALTH: A commodity which, according to the rich, doesn't bring happiness



though according to the poor, it brings something quite closely resembling it.

WORLD: According to those in charge, still a dangerous place. (Example: George Bush in his annual message to Congress, 1991 – 'Despite the disappearance of the Soviet threat, the world continues to be a dangerous place.')

Eduardo Galeano is a Uruguayan writer and author of *Memories of Fire*, a three-part history of the Americas.

The sword and the cross

Catholicism is Peru's official religion. But, as Lucien Chauvin discovers, the strong pulse of Indian spirituality is never far below the surface.

THE Aymara and Quechua people who live on the Peruvian *altiplano* are loyal Catholics: worshippers throng to local churches on most Christian holidays. But according to Peruvian anthropologist, Rodrigo Montoya: 'They are also fervent believers in the gods of the hills, mountains and water'.

It is not uncommon, for example, to find a Catholic priest blessing a *campesino's* maize and potatoes and later to see the same farmer offering food and drink to the *Pachamama*, the earth god, or *Apu*, the god of the hills.

Peru's Indian people are loyal to *Apu* and other gods of farming because they depend on them for a good harvest. But they are loyal to the Catholic saints too – for other reasons. 'An indigenous family wouldn't pray to *Apu* to help their child get into university,' says Montoya. 'They would ask the Virgin Mary.'

Indigenous people were able to maintain their religions while accepting Christianity because the two faiths exist on different levels. 'The Christian God is ethereal, it cannot be touched,' says Montoya. 'But the Quechua gods have human qualities; they eat, drink and sleep like everyone else. They have very specific roles which is why they have survived the conquest.'

Many priests didn't understand the Quechua culture and were tricked into believing the Indians were praying to the Christian God. In Quechua, for example, the word *mamacha* means mother. When indigenous people prayed using the word *mamacha*, the Catholic priests immediately thought that the people were praying to the Virgin Mary when they were more often praying to the earth god, *Pachamama*.

Nonetheless, Indian religion has been under attack in Peru for nearly 500 years. The first Indian bishop of the Peruvian Methodist Church, Pablo Mamani Mamani, says: 'The Spanish tried hard to destroy Inca culture and religion. The Church was not interested in anything but our gold and our land. For nearly 300 years the Catholic Church did nothing to help indigenous people. What's worse, they worked hand-in-hand with the conquerors who killed millions of people.'

A Catholic priest was put in charge of administering most Andean villages if a Spaniard could not be found. This allowed many priests and their congregations to acquire both wealth and power; the Church confiscated land from indigenous people and forced them to work the fields without pay.

When the Spanish began to lose power in the early 19th century and Latin American countries were on the verge of independence, church officials asked that land taken illegally from indigenous communities be turned over to the Church. Consequently when the country

gained independence in 1824 the Catholic Church became the largest land-owner in Peru.

Today, in Lima, the Church owns most of the worst slums in the downtown area and large tracts of land in the poor *barrios* that ring the city. In Pamplona Alta *barrio*, priests from one Catholic order recently built a wall around their property to prevent poor peasants from the countryside invading. The Dominican Fathers, who own most of the slum housing behind the presidential palace, recently raised rents to \$35 a month. (The minimum wage in Peru is \$54 a month.)

'For nearly 500 years the churches have worked with governments to preserve the position of the white dominant class,' says Reverend Enrique Minaya, Secretary General of the Evangelical

Church of Peru. 'The Columbus Quincentennial is a time to reflect on the meaning of the Gospel.'

Peruvian liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez echoes Minaya. He stresses that we must honestly accept what the 'discovery' of the Americas meant for indigenous people.

'We must avoid the tendencies of those who want to hide the immense destruction of indigenous people, their cultures and their ties to the earth,' says Gutierrez.

'The 500th anniversary must not become an invitation to turn back the clock of history. Our examination of the past must not be motivated by nostalgia, but by hope.'

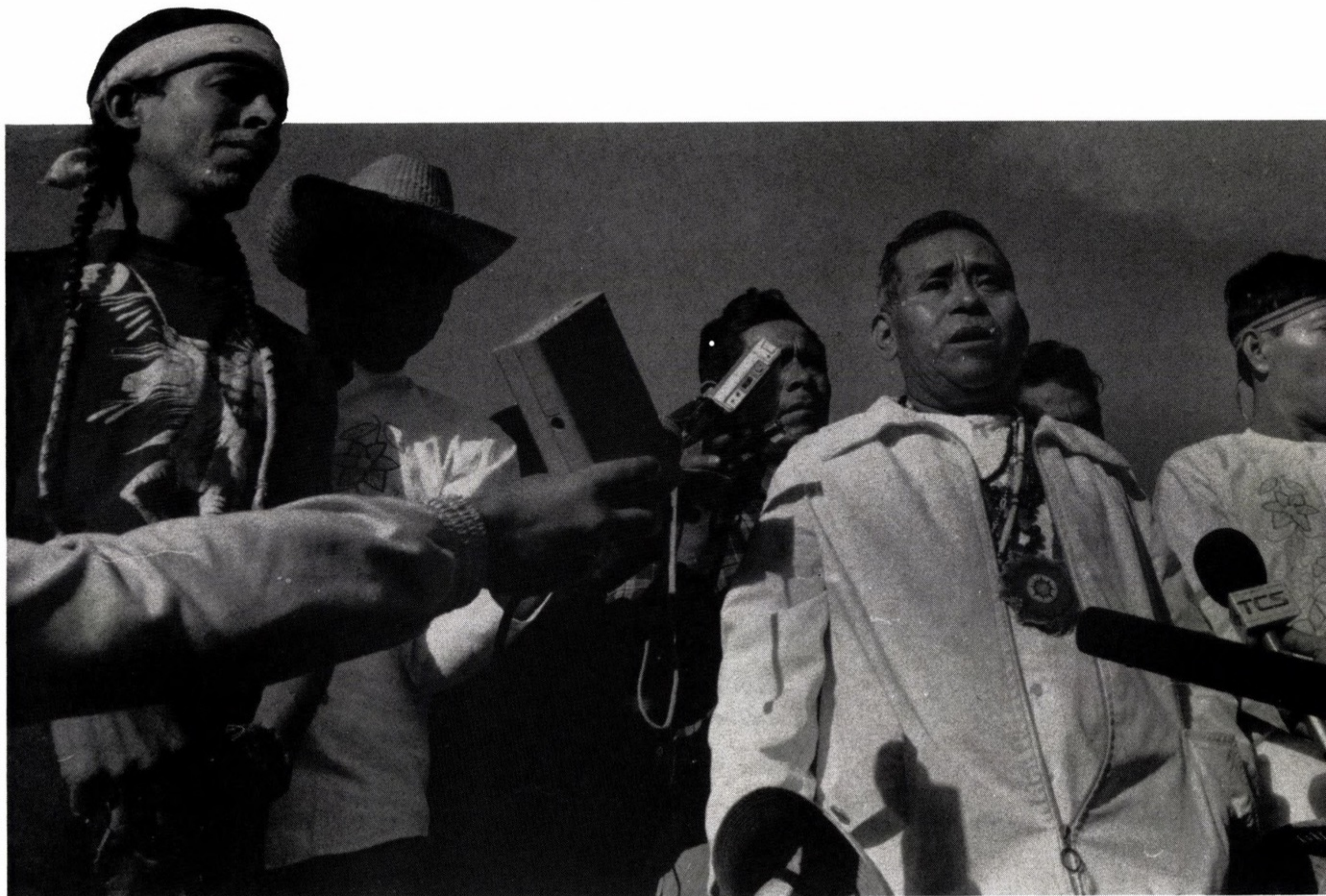
Lucien Chauvin works for Latinamerica Press in Lima.



Peruvian prayer: a blend of Christianity and tradition.

SEBASTIAO SALGADO/MAGNUM

LARRY TOWELL/MAGNUM



The pain of Mother Earth

'Today the white world wants to pretend that all the aboriginal nations have been defeated and that a few white nations are now masters of Mother Earth.'

*Spiritual chief, **Adrian Esquina Lisco**, explains why El Salvador's native peoples remain undefeated.*

IN the time of my ancestors before we were invaded by the white nations, the land and everything that it provided were the common heritage of all our peoples. The Nahuatl, the Lenca and the Maya knew each other as nations; our land was known as *Cuscatlan* – a large and powerful bird which carries the blessing of Mother Earth and which gave us all that we required.

My father has 114 of the white man's years and he tells me that when we lived at one with Mother Earth, there was a special day in each cycle of the calendar when the blue crabs would come out in the evening to dance in couples along the beach. We knew the rivers as the veins of our Mother Earth. Along their banks, new life sprang forth and multiplied. Our people would not

cut trees or build homes along the rivers because from these Mother Earth provided for all our needs.

The land known today as El Salvador is rough and mountainous. But then volcanoes lined its valleys with rich soil, and there we built our communities and multiplied ourselves. We gathered together to build a new home or bring in the harvest whenever one of our kind would beat on the wood of the *guarumo* tree. When life came to an end we returned to our Mother Earth as she had brought us forth, naked – not entombed in a wooden box.

Then 500 years ago the Spanish came, with their long knives and their gunpowder to impose new rules, dividing the land into property and sending its produce to markets across the sea. In spite of their guns

and horses, and their armour and their boats, they were driven back several times and had to return with more troops before they could secure a base in *Cuscatlan*.

The Spanish marked out their *haciendas* and guarded them fiercely but we still lived in our own way on the land that we knew. The invaders built towns along the rivers and pushed back the forests to make their farms without regard to how the land sustained our people. They killed us like the trees whenever we got in the way.

In 1833, after more than 200 years of this invasion, our people rose up against the Spanish and created a new government under the great chief Anastasio Aquino. When the Spanish failed to defeat us with their armed forces, they sent in one of their holy fathers to persuade Anastasio that his



Salvadorean native leader Adrian Esquino Lisco addresses a press conference.

actions were sins against God which could only be forgiven by his marriage to a white princess. Once the ritual was complete, the Spanish made sure of their victory by assassinating our brother Aquino.

Still the land was rich and what was left to our people gave us all we needed. Another hundred years went. Their towns became cities and their *haciendas* swallowed up more of our land, but the veins of Mother Earth still flowed with the fruit of new life. The Nahuatl, the Lenca and the Maya continued to multiply and mixed with the newcomers blurring the distinctions amongst our peoples. We became farm workers and many moved into the cities to earn money in workshops and factories. But the white world's conquest of our people could not remain incomplete. Repression was not enough; subjugation was the goal.

In 1932, people in the cities and in the countryside rose up against the harsh conditions and brutal punishments. The rich and the powerful replied with a massacre which can never be forgotten. They sent their armed forces into our communities and killed 35,000 of our people within a few days. Men were hung from trees with rocks tied to their feet so their heads would be severed. Women were forced to slaugh-

ter our animals and prepare meat for the soldiers before being raped and killed.

We were all accused of being communists as an excuse for the brutality. When the slaughter was complete, we were prohibited from wearing our traditional dress or speaking our native languages. And, of course, those lands which had remained in our hands were stolen. Mother Earth rumbled with earthquakes and hurricanes. The trees have now been torn from the riversides and 11 years of civil war have completed the devastation of the land. Now the soil is treated with fertilizers and pesticides to enrich its owners but we do not have enough to eat. When we have sought reforms to secure a basis for survival, our people have been called subversives and whole communities have been massacred. Mother Earth is in pain and we are dying from hunger and brutality.

Today, the white world talks about ecol-

ogy but it is really only interested in saving what serves its own purposes. Today, the white world wants to understand the native cultures and extract those fragments of wisdom which extend its own dominion.

Today, the white world wants to celebrate its 500th anniversary of invasion and genocide and call it 'the discovery' or 'the encounter'.

Today, the white world wants to pretend that the Nahuatl, the Lenca, the Maya and all the aboriginal nations have been defeated and that a few white nations are now the masters of Mother Earth.

But we still have our voices. And a few still know how to speak in our mother tongues. And no-one is the master of Mother Earth. ■

Adrian Esquina Lisco, Spiritual Chief of the National Association of Indigenous Peoples of El Salvador, talked to **Don Lee**, who translated the piece from Spanish.

The spirit of Manitou

For native Americans language is both a way of understanding the world and a vehicle for passing on their history and culture, as **Peter Nahwegahbo** reports.

PRESERVING our language is the key to our survival as a people,' says Rosella Kinoshameg, a community health nurse on Manitoulin Island in southern Ontario where the Ojibway people live. One of the largest freshwater islands in the world, Manitoulin is the sacred home of the Ojibway 'Great Spirit'. More than half the island's 11,000 people are native people scattered across six reserves.

Only 40 years ago teachers at church-run residential schools on the island condemned Indian languages as 'evil' and native children were routinely punished for speaking Ojibway. Today the Ojibway language is taught at primary schools both on and off the reserves and also at the main high school in West Bay which has both native and non-native students.

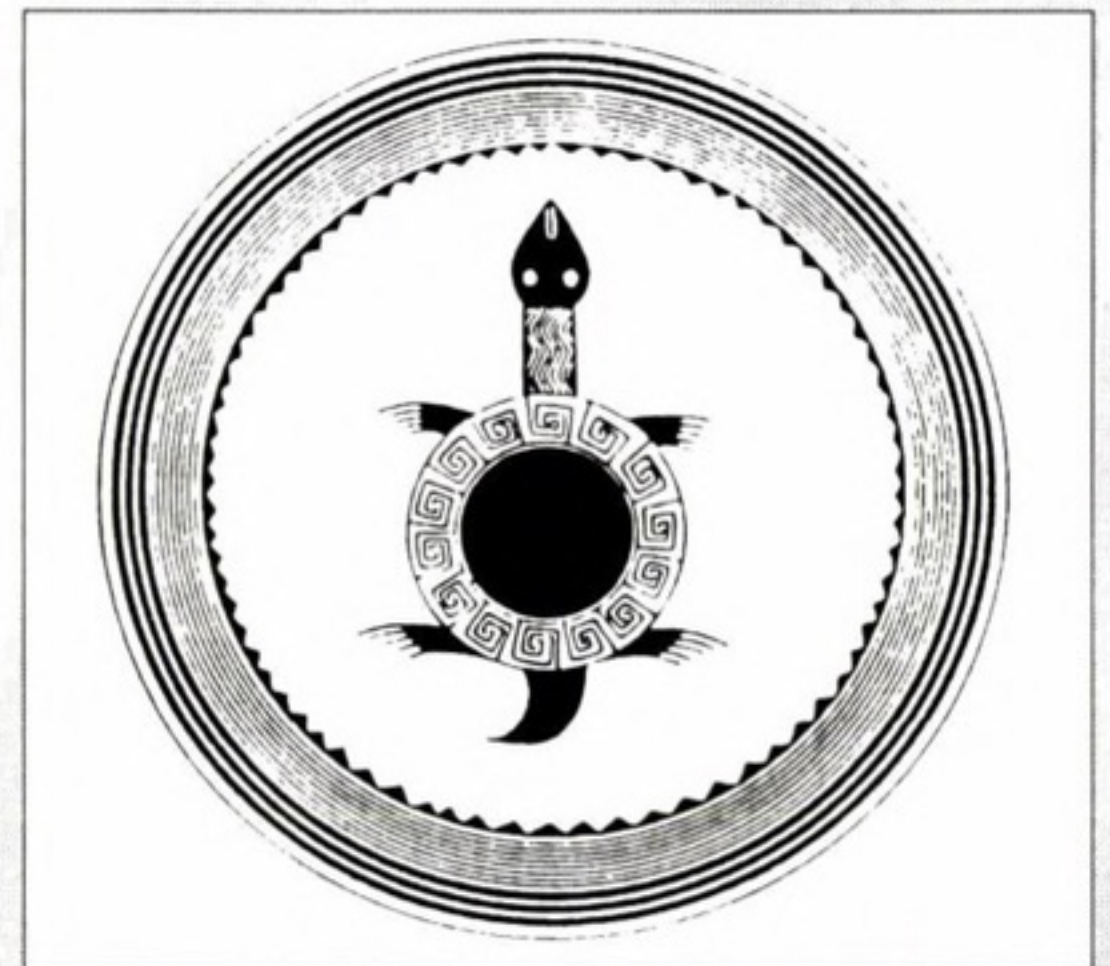
The native community on Manitoulin has also become a focal point for renewed interest in traditional medicines and herbs – though Ms Kinoshameg says native elders on the island have always used herbal medicines. 'It is not really a revival,' she says. 'Our own treatments have just been brought into the open after being forbidden for decades.'

According to Ms Kinoshameg young people must understand the 'seven sacred gifts' before they can use native medicines: respect, humility, compassion, honesty, truth, wisdom and love. 'These gifts are inside everyone,' she says. 'But young people must first recognize them before they can achieve balance and harmony. Only in this way can traditional herbs and poultices be really understood.'

Manitoulin Island is also a rich source of native art. There is a thriving community of native painters and the De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Company has produced some of the country's most electrifying dramas – and arguably the country's best playwright, Tomson Highway, a Cree originally from

the prairie province of Manitoba.

All the island's native artists use their art to teach and communicate traditional values. Jane Woodbury of the De-ba-jeh-ma-jig Theatre says elders are routinely consulted to make certain their plays are accurate. 'Our work is important for the children,' says Ms Woodbury. 'When we show the burning of the



Native traditions: the search for harmony.

sweetgrass for purification, we are helping to pass on native history.'

As the island's native people begin to rediscover themselves they are also taking more control over their own lives. For example, people on the Sucker Creek Reserve recently returned to the ancient traditional system of choosing the chief and council for the band.

Says Chief Patrick Madahbee: 'This move will finally take elections out of the hands of the Department of Indian Affairs and give power back to the people.'

Peter Nahwegahbo works as a librarian at the Sucker Creek Reserve on Manitoulin Island.

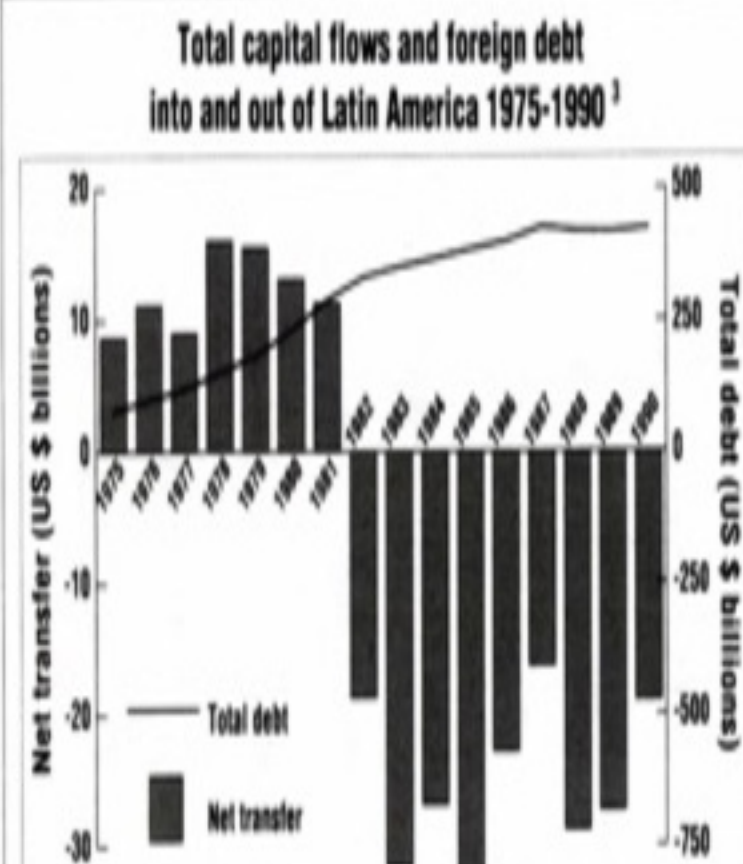
1 Golden dreams

Imperial powers have been pumping wealth out of the Americas for nearly five centuries.

● Columbus forced the Taino Indians in Hispaniola to bring him an ounce of gold every three months. Those who didn't had their hands chopped off while escapees were hunted down with dogs. Despite these desperate measures, Columbus never found his *El Dorado*.¹

● Between 1500 and 1650, 180-200 tons of American gold were added to the European treasury, worth an estimated \$2.8 billion in today's terms.²

● The haemorrhage continues: from 1982-1990, \$200 billion more left the Americas through interest payments and profits than came in from new loans and investment. Foreign debt grew from \$288 billion to \$423 billion during the same period.³



Christopher Columbus inaugurated a colonial era that profoundly altered the future of Europe, the Americas - and the rest of the world. This imperial ethic continues today with the impoverishment of the developing nations, the degradation of the natural environment and the stain of racism.

4 Slavery and racism

Slavery left a legacy of racism which haunts the Americas.

● Columbus was an enthusiastic slaver. On his first voyage he sent six Taino Indians back to Spain and on his second he shipped back 500 natives. 'Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold,' he wrote.¹

● By 1800 nearly 15 million Africans had been brought to the new world. Another 50 million black people are estimated to have died en route or soon after arrival. When Europe finally gave up slavery at the end of the 18th century, one in four Africans were slaves.¹¹

● Racism continues to plague the Americas. In general, whether in Brazil or the US, the blacker you are the poorer you are. In Washington, DC the mortality rate for black children is 26 deaths per thousand births - higher than many Third World nations including Cuba and Jamaica.¹²



5 The wild and the sacred

Europeans had an exploitative and antagonistic attitude towards the environment which contrasted with the respect native people held for nature.

● The Tzotzil Maya in the Guatemalan highlands believe that digging a fingernail into maize to test its ripeness hurts the maize as it would a person.¹³

● Two centuries later the American Bison was hunted almost to extinction in the space of a decade. From 1872-74 alone more than 3 million buffalo were killed on the US plains. By 1885 the animal which had sustained the plains Indians for generations was gone. The killer-hero 'Buffalo Bill' Cody himself shot 4,280 of the animals in 18 months.¹⁴

● The relentless consumption of finite natural resources continues to scar the landscape of the Americas. Rapid deforestation in Central America for cattle grazing and cash crops like cotton has left depleted soils poisoned with chemicals. Central America is the world's highest per capita consumer of pesticides while Costa Rica loses 2.5 tons of soil for every kg of beef exported.¹⁵

2 Plagues and pestilence

The diseases which invading powers brought with them to the Americas continue to devastate peoples who inhabit the remotest regions of this continent.

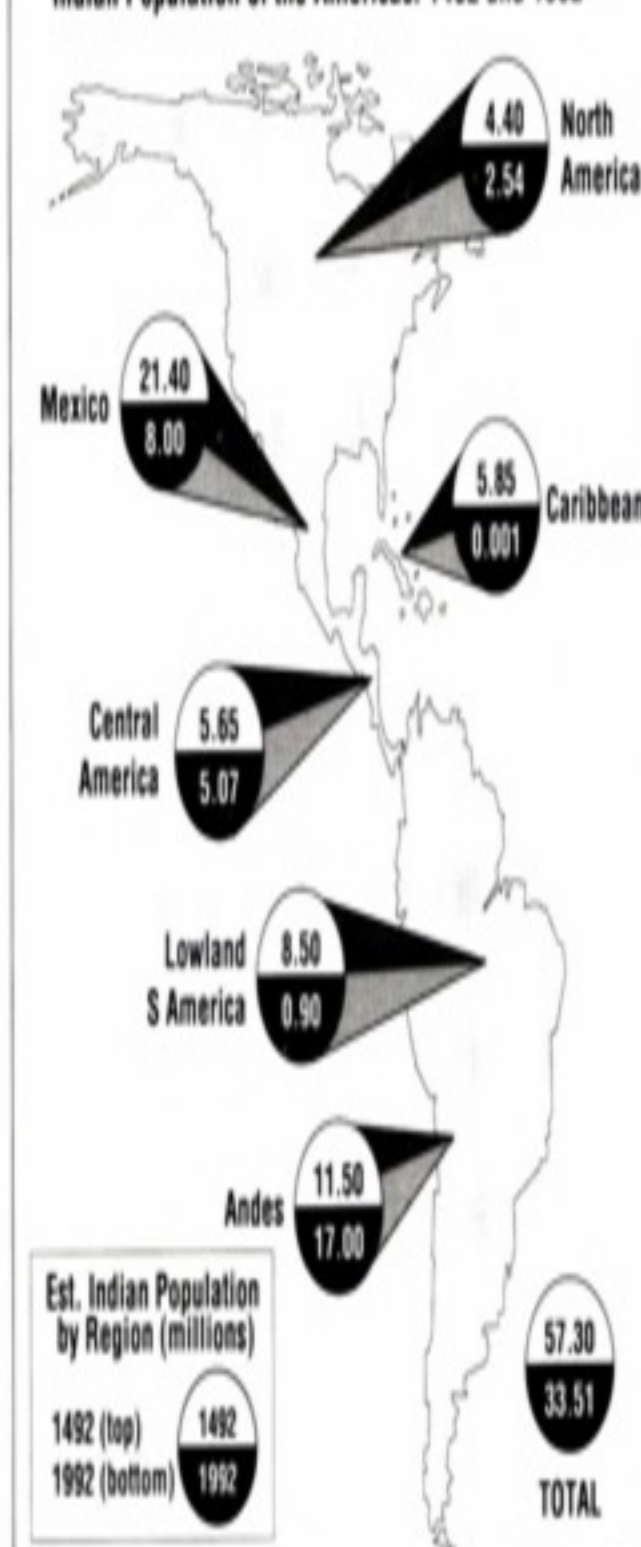


● Fifteen major epidemics raged through the Americas within a century of Columbus: 40 to 50 million native Americans died by the year 1600, equivalent to half a billion people today.¹

● Old world pathogens swept the land, killing between a third and a half of the people in the Inca empire. From 1635-40 nearly half the Huron people in 'New France' died from diseases brought by Jesuit missionaries and traders.⁴

● Today isolated native groups still die from common diseases to which they have no immunities. When miners invaded their land in the late 1980s nearly 2,000 Yanomami Indians in northern Brazil died in the first two years. Survival International says the Yanomami may be disappearing within a decade.⁵

Indian Population of the Americas: 1492 and 1992¹⁰



3 Tyranny and poverty

Colonialism in the Americas separated Indians from their land, destroyed traditional economies and left native people among the poorest of the poor.

● The Spanish ran the Bolivian silver mines with a slave labour system known as the *mita*; nearly eight million Indians had died in the Potosi mines by 1650.⁶

● Suicide and alcoholism are common responses to social dislocation. Suicide rates on Canadian Indian reserves are 10 to 20 times higher than the national average.⁷

● In Guatemala life expectancy for non-natives is 61 years; for Indians it is 45. The infant mortality rate for Indian children is twice that of non-Indians (160 deaths per thousand versus 80).⁸

● In the Amazon, oil companies are invading the territory of the Huarani people and the Ecuadorian Government refuses to recognize the Indians' land rights.⁹ In northern Quebec the Cree are fighting a government plan to flood 350,000 square kilometres in violation of a 1975 land claims treaty.

6 Resistance and Survival

Native Americans continue to resist the attack on their culture and traditions. Today Indian peoples are stronger and more united than at any time since the arrival of Columbus.

● In 1781 Tupac Amaru, a Mestizo descendant of the Inca emperors, led an Indian uprising against the Spanish in Bolivia. He abolished forced labour and slavery and attracted thousands of followers before he was eventually captured and killed by the colonizers.²

● In Bolivia in 1990, more than 800 Indians from the Amazonian lowlands marched for 33 days to La Paz to demand that lumber companies and cattle ranchers stop stealing their land. Indian leaders from the Andean highlands had an historic meeting with their lowland colleagues en route.¹⁶

● The Mohawk community of Kanesatake outside Montreal set up barricades in the summer of 1990 to protest against traditional burial lands being turned into a municipal golf course. The Canadian Government called out the Army and the two-month confrontation galvanized Indians and their supporters across North America.

● Indian organizations in Central America, South America, Mexico, the US and Canada have been organizing education campaigns and public protests against 'official' Columbus Quincentennial celebrations since 1988. Their aim is to expose the hidden history of colonialism and build a new relationship between natives and non-natives based on justice.



1 Columbus: *His Enterprise - Exploding the Myth*, Hans Koning (Monthly Review Press/Latin America Bureau, 1991). 2 *Indian Givers*, Jack Weatherford (Ballantine Books, New York, 1988). 3 Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990. 4 *The Jesuits and the Fur Trade*, Bruce Trigger, from *Sweet Promises*, ed. J. R. Miller, (U of T Press, Toronto, 1991). 5 Yanomami Survival Campaign, Survival International, London, UK, 1990. 6 SEDOS Bulletin, Rome, May, 1990. 7 *The Dispossessed*, Geoffrey York (Lester & Orpen Dennys, Toronto, 1989). 8 *Guatemala: False Hope, False Freedom*, James Painter (CIR, London, 1987). 9 Ecuador Urgent Action Bulletin, (Survival International, London, 1990). 10 *Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, ed. W. Denevan (University of Wisconsin Press, 1976) and *GAIA Atlas of First Peoples*, Julian Burger (Doubleday, New York, 1990). 11 *A People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn (Harper & Row, New York, 1980). 12 *Bright Futures or Broken Dreams*, Children's Defence Fund (Washington, 1991). 13 *Maya History and Religion*, J. Thompson (University of Oklahoma Press, 1970). 14 *Beyond Geography*, Frederick Turner (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ, 1986). 15 *Faces of Latin America*, Duncan Green (Latin America Bureau/Monthly Review, 1991). 16 *The Hand That Feeds Us*, Susanna Rance (from *Report on the Americas*, July, 1991).



CAMERA PRESS

The 'Whole Earth' photo:
a bird's-eye view of the planet.

Escaping Eden

*The imperial ethic knows no bounds. **Jeremiah Creedon** wonders what motivates the restless quest for new frontiers in outer space.*

THE world's largest radio telescope rests in the lush, green hills of Puerto Rico, a 20-acre dish opening skyward like a giant birdbath. This past October scientists began using the Arecibo Observatory to scan the Milky Way for evidence of other civilizations. Scientists with the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) call their study the best hope yet for finding a cosmic message in a bottle. By century's end, the 'search for

extra-terrestrial intelligence' (known by the acronym SETI) could be over.

Last year, astronomers reported an earlier discovery at Arecibo: an asteroid somewhere between Earth and Jupiter they named 1986 DA. This wasn't news until researchers realized the hunk of rock was loaded with gold and platinum: the media was suddenly all ears. According to NASA, 1986 DA could some day become 'a valuable mineral resource for eventual space

colonists'. The *Washington Post* assigned the 'astronomical El Dorado' a 'commodity value' well over a trillion dollars – not bad for a chunk of metal somewhat more than a mile wide and 'shaped roughly like a canned ham'.

Ham, gold and SETI: of all the tributes to Columbus, planned or otherwise, the activities at Arecibo may be the most telling in their contradictions. Five hundred years after Columbus reached the

Caribbean, the society that lionized him has chosen a place very near his landfall to resume his voyage. But where the new explorers may be heading, or whether they agree on what they hope to find, seems very much up in the air.

For those drawn by the promise of golden hams, Arecibo is but another port city to the newest New World, a gateway to the economic exploitation of space. This tendency to view space as the next land of milk and honey is quite common today, especially among those on the radical fringe of capitalism. These would-be pioneers have their own rhetoric, much of it harking back to the war cries of 'Progress' and 'Manifest Destiny' that rallied the European advance across the North American continent. They also have their heroes – and the mythic figure of Columbus is certainly one of them.

But that's only half the picture. Arecibo is also a temple of Science, a religion whose most brilliant believers – say, the minds behind SETI – are on the edge of transcending the ethos that formed them. Science and the ideology of the West personified by Columbus are, of course, fellow-travellers. Both began their journeys from the same point; both are products of the same universe. But Arecibo could mark a place where their paths diverge, where the scientific mind refuses any longer to be a tool, or a weapon, for realizing the Columbian will. Indeed, the potential for space science to undermine the long cultural project it epitomizes could be the last great irony of the Columbian age.

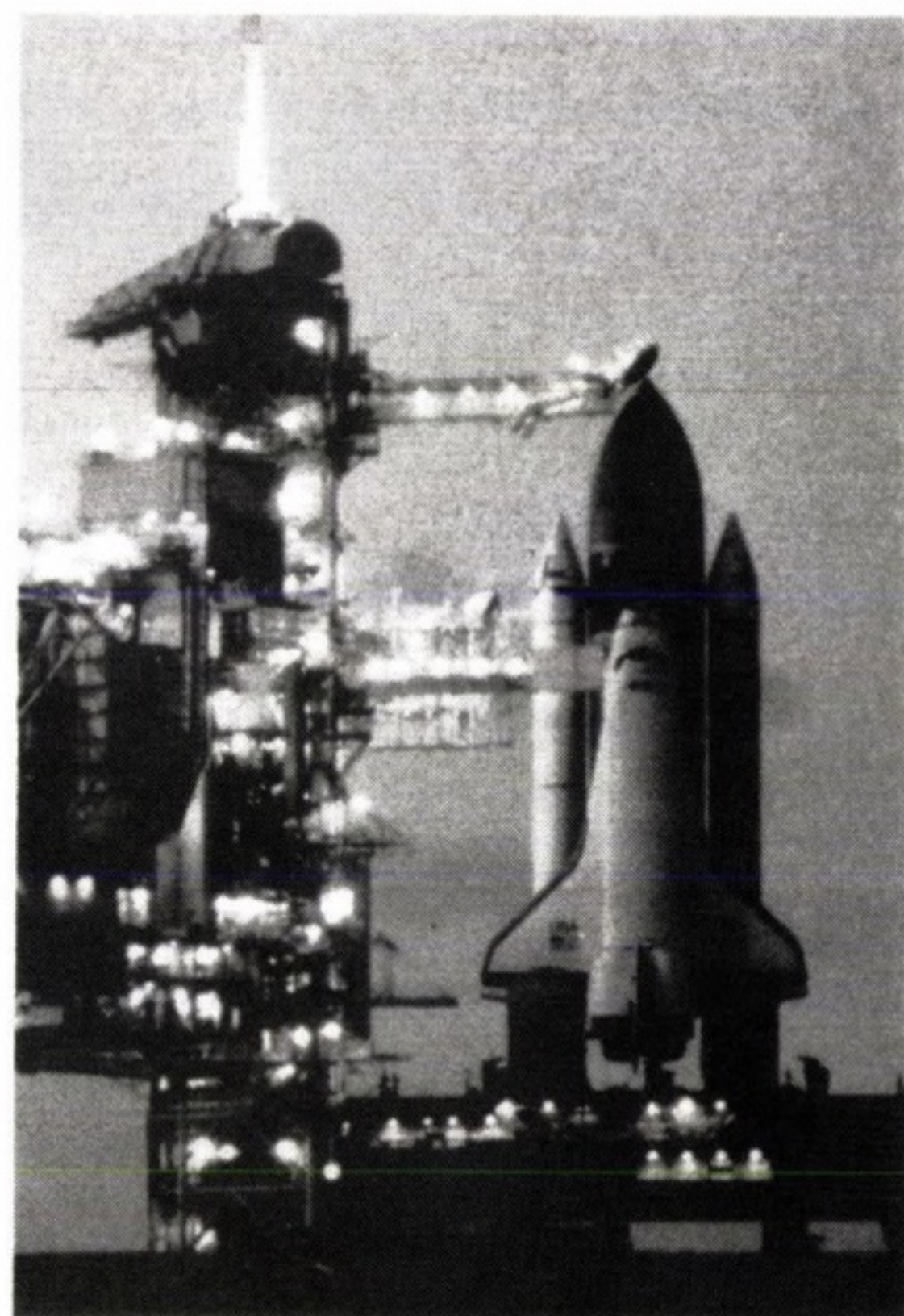
It's common enough these days to speak of modern physicists and

astronomers as astronauts rediscovering the lost wisdom of the ancients. Probing ever deeper into the riddles of the cosmos these theoreticians suddenly realize that the Western model of the universe is far from perfect. Transported from the planet on the only vehicle that can travel faster than the speed of light – the human imagination – they reach a distant point where the long conflict between nature and the Western mind is at last reconciled. After bending metal and fire for a millennium, they have finally learned what others knew by simply observing the world around them.

However belated, this insight has found its way into Western popular culture, thanks in part to some unlikely *bodhisattvas* – the American astronauts who went to the moon. Many astronauts said the voyage deeply affected them, altering the way they viewed the home planet and its place in the universe. Most were pilots with military training – highly disciplined people not prone by nature to romantic reverie. That's a hint at how profoundly jarring it must have been to look back from another world at the frail, lonely beauty of the biosphere.

The earthbound masses shared the experience through a series of remarkable photographs, including the famous 'Whole Earth' shot taken from Apollo 17, the last lunar mission, in 1972. It may be the most influential photo ever taken, and many have noted its impact on popular consciousness. The author Frank White calls it 'the Overview Effect', a perceptual shift that may well rival the Copernican revolution in reshaping general attitudes.

But the photo's true meaning may be more complicated. Like the astronauts who



STEVE SMYTH/CAMERA PRESS

The US space shuttle on the launch pad: incredible waste.

took such pictures, the public has been enlightened by a technological accident – one that rivals Chernobyl in its profound effect on world opinion. In other words, even the awareness that the world must be saved from the effects of technology – from nuclear meltdown, global warming, threadbare forests, depleted seas – is yet another technological by-product. How does one deal with this paradox? Can technology provide its own homeopathic cure?

Twenty years after the last lunar mission, with the Earth growing ever more ill, the most ardent ecologist may have to consider the ironic possibility that going back to the moon, or to Mars, may be the only hope. Perhaps another generation must be forced to reflect on the biosphere's fragility – a fact that becomes obvious from the cosmic vantage. And if the Apollo experience is any indicator, nothing contradicts the bombastic rhetoric about space exploration better than the act itself. Like everything else thrown up there, comparisons with the voyages of Columbus or wagon treks across the American West suddenly become quite weightless.

On Earth it's a different story. The Columbus analogy is very popular with the aerospace crowd and their political allies. This trend is not new. The Apollo command module that orbited the moon while the first two men descended to its surface was called Columbia; so is one of the space shuttles flying today. Last summer, proponents of a new space station tried to shame a skeptical Congress into turning over the \$40 billion needed to build it. The example of Columbus and the country's need for a

In the wake of Columbus: modern explorers pursue traditional goals.



NASA/CAMERA PRESS

new frontier were often cited in the debate, which station supporters eventually won. The big losers were public-housing advocates and the majority of space scientists, who argued by the dozen that the station will do nothing to advance their research.

Most observers agree that space exploration has come to a standstill. Those who consider it a waste of money should take no comfort from this fact; the billions are spent anyway, siphoned off by the giant aerospace corporations regardless of whether anything flies or not. The Americans and Soviets spend the most, but France, Germany, UK, Japan and even China are also eager to become 'spacefaring' nations.

In the US, diehard capitalists blame the delay in opening space on the government – on NASA – and say the whole project should be turned over to the private sector. Free enterprise and greed are often cited as the best fuels for extra-terrestrial travel. Without the potential for individual gain, the new cosmic pioneers will never summon the money needed to carry on the Columbian adventure. Or so they say.

Plans for settling space on this model seem ludicrous: a triumph of ideology over common sense. One idea is to refit the space shuttle's external fuel tank into an orbiting dormitory, filled with eager space settlers. Once aloft, they'd presumably find ways to make their fortunes, perhaps by fixing satellites or inventing new drugs in micro-gravity. According to one enthusiast: 'Progress that would require decades of NASA study contracts and pilot projects will be collapsed into a few years of

Lunar landing: a triumph of ideology over common sense.



CAMERA PRESS

Darwinian struggle.'

But perhaps the real problem lies below the level of economic ideology. The issue can be simply stated: can Columbus and Gaia coexist? Obviously, they cannot. Without a new vision incorporating the very knowledge that space flight has given the world, further exploration may not be possible.

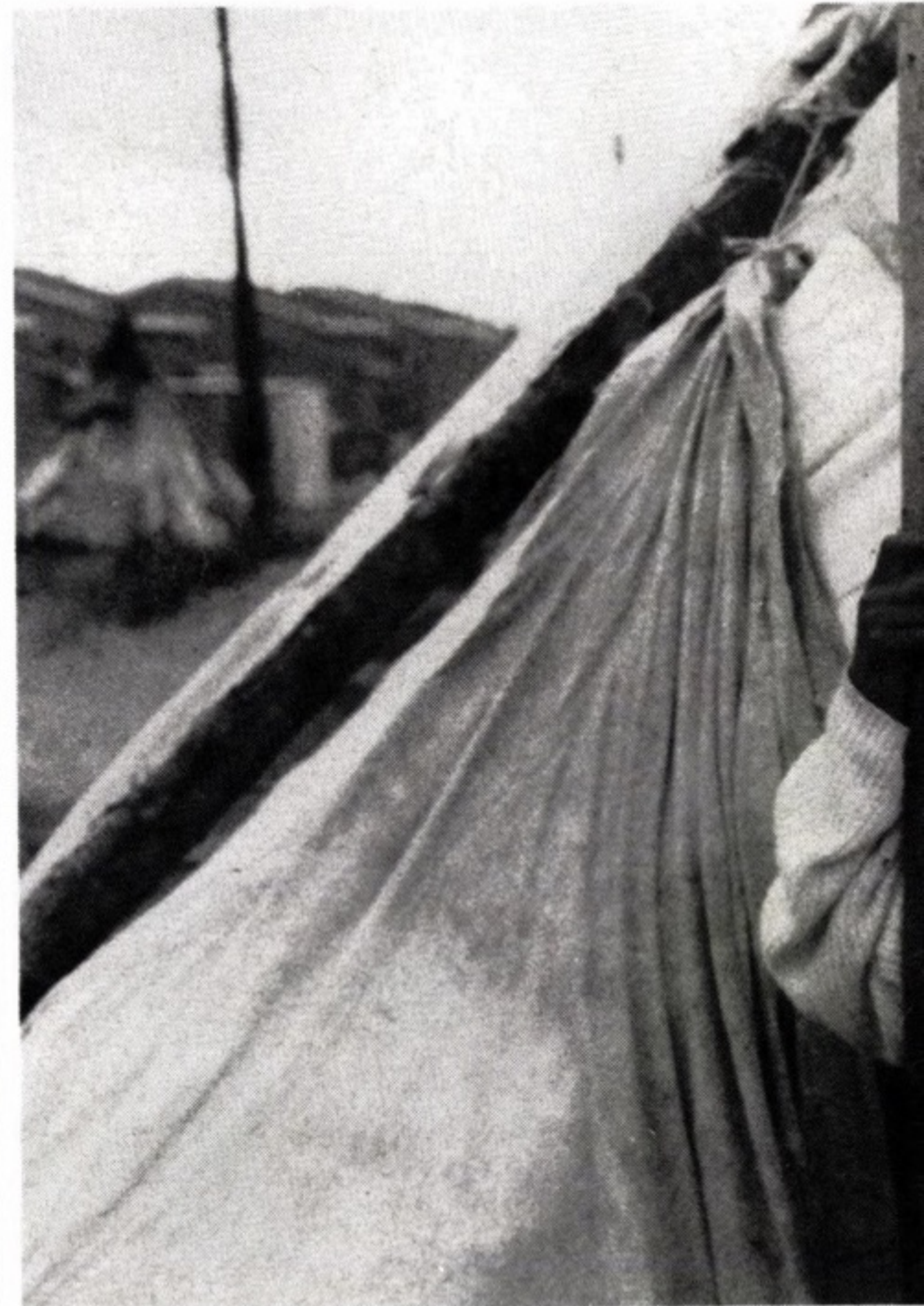
Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, the father of Russian cosmonautics, believed that space was the next step in human evolution. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks turned the obscure theorist into a cultural hero, seeing that his own vision was a fantastic extension of their own. In Britain, HG Wells wrote that: 'Life, forever dying to be born afresh, forever young and eager, will presently stand upon this earth as upon a footstool, and stretch out its realm amidst the stars.' The science fiction author Ray Bradbury gives the idea a familiar American spin: 'We cannot stay at home now,' he writes, 'even as we did not sit on the front porches of 1492 Spain ...'

This is the old myth, in its many guises. The new paradigm begins with the realization that, for all practical purposes, 'we' are going nowhere. Our minds can visit distant stars and ponder the riddles of time and space. And we may find that other beings are sharing this meditation with us, from a great distance. But we will never touch them. Our bodies must remain here, surrounded by beauty or filth, whichever we prefer.

The SETI project at Arecibo is only one of many space-related tributes to Columbus in 1992, which also happens to be the *International Space Year*. That's no coincidence, of course: space enthusiasts in the US Congress saw a chance to link the Columbus jubilee with the 35th anniversary of the *International Geophysics Year*, when scientists first used orbiting surveyors to study the Earth's environment. Two US presidents, NASA, the departments of State, Energy, Defence and Education, the aerospace industries, numerous scientific groups, several major museums and many others endorsed the effort. Celebrating space exploration's tie to both environmental science and Columbus seemed like a great idea – innocuous enough for almost everyone to support.

Which makes this the perfect chance to expose these visions as incompatible. The time is right to make a choice: let's leave the Columbus paradigm behind and face up to what space has really taught us. The overcrowded, anxious, dirty industrial world must realize that if Eden is anywhere, it lies beneath our feet. ■

Jeremiah Creedon lives in Minneapolis and is the former editor of *Final Frontier*, a magazine about space exploration.



Women's wisdom

Western popular culture is threatening the roots of Indian identity. Phoebe Nahanni talks to women elders in Canada's Northwest Territories about the critical work of passing on native customs.

EVERY spring I watch the formations of geese honking as they gracefully fly northward – and I long to follow them. You see, I am one of the aboriginal Dene people. Now I live in Montreal, but my roots are in the North where I was born in a bush camp many years ago. And, like the geese, I am compelled to go back every year to my homeland.

This year I had a special mission – to find out how much the Dene still depend on their traditional way of life. I wanted to know why aboriginal culture has apparently been superseded by Western culture.

For today, although the Dene continue to hunt, fish and gather seasonally, they do not live as their ancestors did. Family units of around 20 people have evolved into communities of up to 2,000 people. While



A young Dene girl outside her family's summer camp: passing on traditions.

most Dene still practice bush life, they also take jobs that pay wages. Although most speak or understand their native tongue, they prefer to speak English. The young people's choice of music used to be disco but now it's rap: *Vanilla Ice* reflects the communities' preference for the modern and the Western.

Whenever I visit the north, I always meet with the elders. They are easy to find because in the summer they still live in tents, with spruce boughs for flooring and a wood stove outside for cooking. As I approach they hand me dried meat or *ban-nock* (pan-fried bread) and some tea. To some they appear as relics of the past with no real authority over matters in the community. I hold a different view.

Historically among the Dene the elders were the teachers. They transferred Dene customs to their family and gave advice when decisions had to be made.

The elders taught that each Dene originated from the Creator. Everything had to be done with respect for the Creator and the land. This respect was set down in Dene customs which were followed like moral obligations, dictating the proper attitude towards the Creator, each other, children, parents and the land. From the oral traditions emerged legends, songs, drums and tea dances.

The Dene women in particular played a prominent role in the family. The female elders I spoke with in their summer camps

last summer told me how they had learned their traditional role.

Long ago, they said, children learned about the land, water, fire, animals and survival by watching and sharing what their parents did. Both boys and girls participated in everyday living – fetching water, learning how to set snares for rabbits, seeing different types of snow and their effect on travel or hunting conditions. Surrounded by the immense boreal forest, children learnt about the types of trees – which is best for firewood, for building houses, for making tools.

At puberty a young girl was secluded and taught everything she needed to know about being a woman, a responsible mother and a contributor to Dene society. She was taught not only by her mother, but also by her grandmother, aunts and other women in the community.

One elder, Martina, told me that when she was growing up, her mother had become very ill. This had prompted Martina to marry at 15, to a man much older than herself. Her mother approved because he was a good provider. And though Martina was very lonely for her mother at first, she knew enough to subsist in the bush – hunting, snaring, fishing, canoeing, using a gun.

Her mother-in-law taught her many other skills: how to prepare moose hides for tanning, how to make sinew for sewing, how to sew with porcupine quills, coloured

threads and beads, and how to make birch bark baskets.

She regularly participated in the process of setting up a bush camp. This was a group activity involving everyone from the youngest to the oldest. All the tasks were shared and a young woman had to help her mother. Their busy day usually began around five in the morning, with lighting the fire, cooking and cleaning up after meals. If there was a hide that needed working on, it was done collectively. Fetching firewood, gathering berries and root carrots, herbs and birch sap, drying fish, sewing moccasins and baskets, and mending clothes were all done while the women watched their children.

Martina has since had 12 children. Each time she gave birth she collected moss which she placed in the baby bag for diapers, made baby bonnets, nursed and sang songs. This way her children learned Dene traditions as she had done.

But another elder I spoke to, Annette, had been initiated quite differently. She was born in a summer camp. Her mother died when she was young and she and her brother and sister were sent to a mission school for four years.

She squinted her eyes as she related her story to me, as if trying to remember parts which she had blotted out. Yes, she did learn her ABCs, and she could still speak her native Slavey. But when she came home from the mission school at 14 she knew nothing about bush life. It was then that Elsie, another elder and one of the best Dene teachers, showed her how to cook, hunt, prepare and tan moose hides as well as how to make clothes and moccasins from the hide.

Annette soon preferred bush life; she and her husband Jim claim their life in the bush is their wealth and well-being.

Today it is harder for Dene people to pass on their traditions to their children. With the introduction of Christianity just before the turn of the 20th century and compulsory education since the mid-1940s the elder's role as teacher has gradually diminished. Western influence is now very strong. But still the elders hope that as they carry on the traditions their grandchildren will observe and learn.

It is desperately important that they do. There is an Dene adage which roughly translated goes: 'If you don't listen to your mother you won't live long.' Among the ancient forest hunters and gatherers, this wisdom was as vital as it was customary. The elders' knowledge of their ancestral history makes it as important today if the Dene people are to survive as a people. ■

Phoebe Nahanni is a Slavey-speaking member of the Dene Nation who currently lives in Montreal.

KIRK CONDYLES/IMPACT VISUALS

Simply – The stolen continent

Spiritual malaise and social turmoil were rife in 15th century Europe. Epidemic diseases and famine raged. Death was omnipresent. War was widespread and institutions of authority like the Church were venal and corrupt. The 'discovery' of America offered the possibility of a new beginning for Europe. Unfortunately, the invading powers chose to solve their problems at the expense of the new land and the native Americans who lived there.

1. Gold and silver

COLUMBUS hungered for gold but found little. However his followers did: Cortes plundered the Aztec temples and Pizarro stole shiploads of Inca wealth. But while Indians worked the Spanish mines of Bolivia and Mexico, most of the wealth eventually wound up in the pockets of Dutch, British and French businessmen.

The old European mercantile economy was shaken by the massive injection of American wealth. In 1500, Europe had \$200 million worth of gold and silver: a century later the amount was eight times greater. Inflation sent the value of precious metals plummeting worldwide. (The Ottoman Empire saw the value of its silver hoard fall 50 per cent by 1584, knocking the Islamic power from contention as a major trading bloc.) And as the American booty spread around Europe, a new merchant and capitalist class was launched.

Soon the British and Dutch expanded into North America, India, China and southeast Asia. By 1750 a truly global trading network had been established with Europe in firm control. The catalyst: American gold and silver.



A native artist's view of the attack by Cortés on the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán.

2. Profit and slaves

THE unimaginable wealth of the Americas soon rendered redundant the old trade routes through Africa – once the main source of new supplies of gold and silver. Africa now had only one thing the Europeans wanted: slaves to work the mines and plantations of the new world. Slavery had existed in Africa for centuries but the demand for cheap labour in the Americas turned the sale of black flesh into a booming and immensely profitable business.

By 1619 a million slaves had been brought to Spanish and Portuguese colonies in South America. The British and French easily dominated the slave trade as Spanish ships were too busy hauling all the new American wealth back home. Like American Indians, black people throughout the Americas were abused, degraded and murdered in the pursuit of profit. This legacy of racism and intolerance still cripples social relations throughout the Americas – from Argentina to the Arctic.

3. Banks and business

OPPORTUNITIES for profit in the Americas also produced the ancestors of today's giant multinational corporations. Pirates like Francis Drake got private financing and royal approval for his plunder of Spanish treasure. Later these pirates also branched out into slavery (forming businesses like the Royal African Company) and eventually plantation agriculture.

In the Caribbean and along the coast of Virginia and the Carolinas, plantations growing sugar, tobacco, rice and cotton were hacked out of the forest and black slaves imported to work them. Later, British traders launched business ventures like The Hudson Bay Company (which was 'granted' by Charles II a chunk of Canada larger than Western Europe) and The Virginia Company. The imperial goals of Britain were closely tied to these private business interests. As the corporations prospered (backed by the unrivalled strength of the British Navy) a sophisticated banking system sprang up to handle all the new wealth, followed soon by stock markets to attract new investors.



4. Cotton catalyst

THE industrial revolution began in Europe, sparked by raw materials from the colonies – especially American cotton, which was stronger, cheaper and more plentiful than cotton from Asia. As thousands of bales of the new variety poured into Europe derelict grain mills were quickly converted to process it into cloth.

But the textile industry really took off when Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in Massachusetts in 1793. This new technology allowed a single worker to process 50 pounds of cotton a day. Soon spinning and weaving were also mechanized and the industrial revolution was in full gear. From 1790 to 1860, raw cotton production in the US jumped from 3,000 to 4.5 million bales a year. By 1850, finished cotton cloth accounted for half of all British exports.

The highly-mechanized textile business became a model for other newly-emerging industries. As this model spread, so did the demand for raw materials. Cotton plantations sprang up right across the US South, scattering the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Cherokee Indian nations in the process.





5. Pizza and potatoes

COTTON was not the only American plant with global impact. In the centuries following Columbus, new foods from the Americas changed diets around the world. Imagine India without curry, Russia without vodka, Italy without pizza, Switzerland without chocolate or Africa without maize. Chili peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, cocoa and maize-corn all originated in America. In fact 60 per cent of

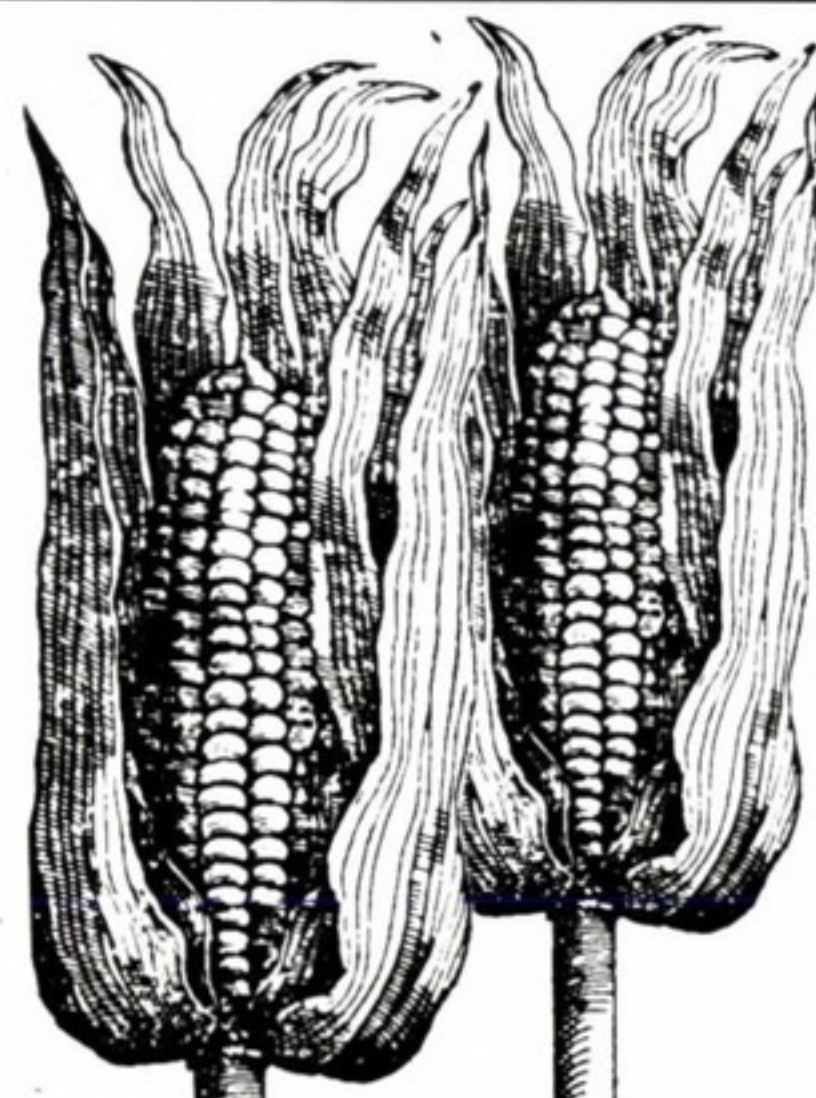


all crops around the world were first cultivated and eaten by American Indians.

The potato, in particular, transformed Europe. Although slow to gain acceptance, by the late 1600s the little tuber was widely grown by peasants and soon became a staple. Potatoes were easier to grow than traditional grains like wheat; they also produced more calories per acre, had limitless uses and were easily stored. As the potato was adopted across northern Europe, famines disappeared, general nutrition improved and populations increased; the Irish population tripled in the century after the potato was introduced. Indeed this vegetable became so crucial to the Irish diet that thousands starved to death after potato blight struck Ireland in 1845.

6. Cornucopia

INDIAN corn had a similar impact. It was carried by returning slave ships to Africa where thick maize porridge quickly became an essential part of the African diet – especially in southern Africa. In Europe maize was mainly used to feed livestock and poultry, producing healthier animals and increasing the supply of protein-rich milk, eggs, cheese and meat. By the late 1700s maize was widely cultivated in Italy and Spain; more abundant protein led to improved health, lower infant mortality and larger populations. The number of people in Italy grew from 11 million to 18 million in less than a century after maize was introduced.



7. Guano-ecology

AMERICAN Indians also practised farming techniques which were eagerly adopted by the colonizers. The Indians planted mixed crops like corn, beans and squash in small mounds, not neat rows of one plant variety. The method was copied by early white settlers, since it was ideally suited to newly-cleared land studded with tree stumps. Recent Mexican studies have shown that this kind of mixed cropping can increase maize yields by as much as half.

In Peru, Inca farmers collected guano – the nitrogen-rich droppings of sea birds along the Pacific coast. The fertilizer was so valuable that Inca law forbade the killing of sea birds. In the 19th century millions of tons of guano were exported to Europe, reinvigorating depleted soils and improving yields in an ecologically sound way. From 1840 to 1880 Peru exported 11 million tons of guano worth \$600 million. More importantly the guano trade prompted research into other fertilizers and was an important step in the development of modern agriculture.

8. Native democracy



A woven wampum belt, symbol of the original Iroquois Confederacy.

THE political structures of North American Indians did more than classical Greece to spread ideas of freedom and democracy around the globe. From the time of Columbus Europeans were astounded by the lack of hierarchy in Indian society. In general, there were no kings, no social classes and community respect was based on good works, not wealth or property. Life was ruled by ceremony, tradition and kinship, although there were wide variations between Indian nations and many undemocratic tendencies. (The Maya and the Aztecs practised blood sacrifice, and slavery was common.)

Indian democracy inspired both Europeans and the emerging United States. (The eagle design on the US insignia was stolen from the Iroquois; the six arrows in the bird's talons represent the six Iroquois nations.) The Iroquois League was studied by Tom Paine (whose writing influenced both the American and French Revolutions) and Ben Franklin, one of the fathers of the American constitution. The Iroquois system, which underlies US democracy today, is a true 'federal' democracy, blending several sovereign nations into one government. The French and British could never accept that Indian nations were run collectively rather than by supreme rulers. They insisted on dealing with a 'chief', even though political power was vested in a group. This fundamental conflict in political values continues to poison relations between Indian nations and white governments throughout the Americas.

Source: Much of the above is based on the work of Jack Weatherford, from his book *Indian Givers* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1990).



Black Brazil

Brazil has the largest black population outside Africa and prides itself on being a 'racial democracy'. But as Lourdes Teodoro reports, 300 years of slavery has left a legacy of deep-seated racism.

PORTUGUESE colonists brought the first African slaves to Brazil in 1549, a mere 50 years after Columbus launched the Spanish assault on Latin America. Yorubas, Adjás, Fons and other Africans from the 'Gold Coast' were brought to cut cane, pan for gold, build churches and construct roads. Before the trade in black flesh ended 350 years later nearly eight million slaves had been shipped to Brazil. Thanks to their labour the huge nation flourished and became a prosperous colony.

Slavery was finally abolished in 1888. And today racism is banned by the Constitution and punishable by imprisonment. However black people in Brazil are far from having their human rights respected: violent racist attacks are an everyday event. The majority of 595 'suspects' shot dead by São Paulo police in 1990 – allegedly in self-defence – were black. So too were most of nearly 500 teenage 'street children' blown to pieces by 'extermination gangs' in the state of Rio in 1990. And many of the 1700 people killed because of land disputes since 1964 have been black, including peasant union leader Ribeiro de Souza.

Racism in Brazil is hard to prove because the myth of racial democracy is carefully cultivated – but take a look around. Only a handful of the 503 members of Congress are black; two out of 23 state governors are black; there are no black ambassadors. And the only Afro-Brazilians

you see in Brasília's government buildings are serving coffee, mopping floors or chauffeuring around white Brazilian bureaucrats.

Black invisibility begins in school where virtually all books are written by white authors. The only mention that black children hear of their ancestors is as anonymous slaves freed by Princess Isabel in 1888. No wonder that the lure of wages

and family poverty inclines many children to go out to work; only six per cent of black children make secondary school.

Poor education leads to badly paid jobs. Almost half of Brazilian blacks take home less than the minimum wage of \$80 a month; a larger proportion of black women take home less. Even when they do have the training and experience for better paid work, the dice is loaded against black people. Many advertisements demand a 'good appearance' – a not-so-subtle shorthand for 'black women need not apply'. And certain jobs are no-go areas. In Rio for example, there are said to be only five black waiters – white diners do not want to be served by black hands.

Most destructive of all to black self-esteem has been the ideology of *branqueamento* or 'whitening'. This theory was dreamed up in the 1920s to stop Brazil becoming a predominantly black country.

Colour blind

Black people are determined to challenge racism in Uruguay, as **Amelia Villaverde** discovers.

BLACK people in Uruguay are largely invisible. But Homer Rodriguez is about to change that. Rodriguez runs *Mundo Afro*, a small research and campaigning organization crammed into a ramshackle house in Barrio Sur, one of Montevideo's oldest neighbourhoods.

'Black people in Uruguay need to reclaim their history and discover their own identity,' says Rodriguez. 'The Spanish and the other European colonizers did not want us to know what our parents or grandparents thought.'

African slaves were brought to this small country between Brazil and Argentina mostly to work in the cities as servants and construction workers. Slavery is long gone but most Uruguayan blacks are locked into the same jobs as their ancestors; 80 per cent work in the service sector and three-quarters of all black women are employed as maids or cooks.

Mundo Afro member Beatriz Ramirez says

white employers prefer to hire black women as maids. 'It fits the stereotype and it doesn't disturb the dominant white society,' she says. This kind of discrimination is what *Mundo Afro* wants to change through its wide-ranging education work: the group does everything from training social workers to holding black community festivals.

According to Ramirez, 1992 will be a pivotal year for blacks all over Latin America. *Mundo Afro* hopes to bring together black people from 76 different organizations throughout the region in the 'Pan-African Congress of the Three Americas', to be held in Montevideo in October, 1992.

Says Ramirez: 'This will be a fantastic chance for black people to work together and to speak openly about the racism which still exists.'

Amelia Villaverde is a Uruguayan journalist working with *Third World Guide* in Montevideo.

White immigration from Europe was encouraged to stem the black tide. 'The black in Brazil will disappear within 70 years,' said one congressman in 1923. Others like author Afranio Peixoto wrote: 'In 200 years the black eclipse will have passed entirely'.

In 1945 the country's immigration policy declared the need to 'develop within the country's ethnic composition the most convenient characteristics of its European descent'. And a 1966 Foreign Ministry leaflet guaranteed that the Brazilian population was white, with a minute proportion of the population being of mixed blood. As recently as 1988, an advisor to then São Paulo governor, Paulo Maluf, proposed a national birth control campaign aimed at blacks, mixed bloods and Indians, to prevent them from becoming a majority.

Indeed, black activists say that mass sterilization campaigns run by private groups in Brazil target Afro-Brazilian women precisely for this reason. When South African black leader Nelson Mandela visited recently he was handed a document claiming that 20 million black Brazilian women have been sterilized.

This 'whiter than white' ideology is all pervasive. For example, the 1980 census required blacks to fit themselves into one of 136 colour categories – including 'burnt white', 'toasted' and 'cinnamon'. There has been some progress in the last decade. The 1991 census reduced the options to five – white, black, *pardo* (mixed race), Asiatic or Indian. Brazil's black movement (which has been growing since the independence of African countries in the 1960s and 70s) played a vanguard role in suggesting that anyone with black genes should identify themselves as black. *Mulato voce e' negro* – 'if you are mulato, you are black' was their slogan.

In the most recent census one of the key black advocacy groups adopted a more ambiguous stance with posters showing three people of different shades of blackness under the slogan 'Don't let your colour go unregistered'. Although in Portuguese this is a clever pun, for some it was needlessly confusing, helping whites to maintain divisions among blacks.

Whites in power have tried every tactic they can think of to keep themselves in the majority. But blacks have the satisfaction of knowing they have achieved one victory at least: despite the difficulties of classification, the 1980 census showed that 45 per cent of the Brazilian population was black. Results of the most recent census will almost certainly show that blacks are now the majority. ■

Lourdes Teodoro is an Afro-Brazilian sociologist. She lives in Brasilia. The article was translated by **Jan Rocha**.

The curse of Columbus

Rick McDaniel visits the Dominican Republic where the government is building a modern version of King Tut's tomb to house the remains of the great explorer.

THE palace which Christopher Columbus' son Diego built in the Dominican Republic nearly 500 years ago still stands, hidden away in the 16th Century Colonial Quarter of Santo Domingo. From the balustrade at the rear of the baroque building you can just glimpse the *Faro a Colon*, the enormous new lighthouse designed as Columbus' tomb. It's barely a mile away on the other side of the river. But the view is spoiled for most tourists by the sprawling shantytowns which hug the river bank.

'These homes are all to be destroyed,' Tomas Marrero says, pointing along the river. 'And some of them have been here for 20 years. This is what the government means with its programme to "clean and beautify" Santo Domingo.'

Marrero is a Jesuit priest who has lived and worked in the riverside slums for more than two decades. According to Marrero nearly half a million people have already lost their homes. 'They've simply been uprooted and moved to government-approved locations 20 to 30 kilometres outside the city.' The new settlement areas are totally unserved: the people have no electricity, no water, no sewers and no transport back to the capital, Santo Domingo, where most of them work.

The relocation programme is part of the government's preparations for the celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the 'Discovery and Evangelization of America'. President Joaquin Balaguer is hoping 1992 will bring a major influx of tourists and foreign currency to the country. It is impossible to say how many hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent getting ready for these anticipated visitors: \$70 million has been spent on renovating the 'Airport of the Americas'. Expensive hotels, with elegant shopping arcades and casinos, are popping up along the Caribbean coast, and the crumbling colonial section of Santo Domingo is being spruced up.

But the most extravagant of all the Quincentennial projects is the colossal Columbus lighthouse. The government has put a \$35 million price tag on the project but critics estimate the final cost may be twice as much.

The *Faro* looks like a huge pyramid with an elongated side. When complete it will have permanent exhibits from Spain, Italy, and several nations in the Americas. But its ostensible purpose is to house the marble and bronze tomb containing the bones of the famous dis-

coverer. (Whether they are actually Columbus's bones is in dispute: Seville in Spain also claims his remains.)

The great man's bones will be paraded to their new resting place in a pomp-filled ceremony in October 1992, planned to coincide with the anniversary of the first landfall. The Dominican government hopes both the Pope and the King Juan Carlos of Spain will attend.

The *Faro* will be topped with a torch-like crown intended to cast a 300,000 watt beam of light in the shape of a cross, high enough and bright enough to be seen throughout the Caribbean. In Santo Domingo itself the only lights visible at night are in tourist hotels and expensive restaurants with their own private generators. The Republic's ancient oil-powered electrical system is a shambles, and the nation is plagued with blackouts.

The folly of the *Faro* would be ludicrous if it weren't so serious. For students at the *Polytechnical Institute* in San Cristobal just outside the capital, the lighthouse fiasco is symbolic of the government's misplaced priorities. Franklyn and Emilio are typical.

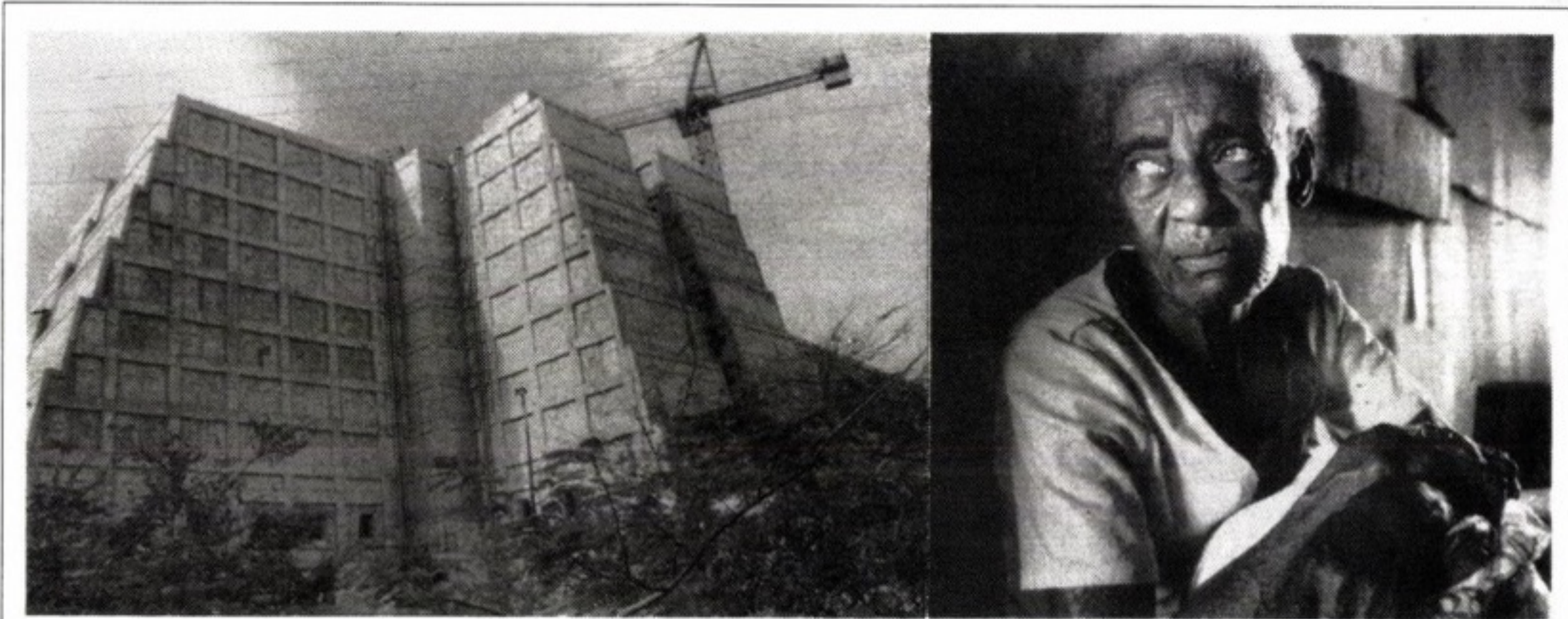
'The government has already spent \$200 million preparing for the 1992 celebrations,' Franklyn complains. 'But for four months this year the hospitals and schools were closed because of strikes. And we have no food and no clean water. Why does the government spend our money on the tourists and not on the Dominican people?'

'The only ones who will celebrate this anniversary,' adds Emilio, 'will be those whose selfish desire to be remembered in the history books has kept this country poor'.

The students have reason to be angry. There are few jobs in Santo Domingo. Those who do find regular work, in one of the tourist hotels for example, may earn as little as \$50 a month. Inflation has jacked up the cost of even basic foods like rice and beans beyond the reach of many: prices have risen an average 300 per cent during the past year.

'Within sight of these fancy tourist hotels there are five million poor people who can barely feed themselves,' says Father Marrero. 'The beam of the *Faro* will light up the clouds, but in the streets people will trip in the darkness.'

Rick McDaniel works with the Canadian YM/YWCA in Fredericton, New Brunswick.



The Columbus lighthouse under construction (left): a shadow over the Dominican Republic's poor.

ACTION DIRECTORY

From bigotry to diversity

US activist **Philip Tajitsu Nash** offers some tips for bringing Columbus into the community and the classroom.

The 500th anniversary of Columbus' first contact with the 'New World' is an important opportunity for challenging widespread myths about the history of the Americas — the impact of which is still very much with us.

It's important that each teacher, student, parent and community member helps to ensure that the 'celebrations' planned across Europe and the Americas respect the viewpoints outside the mainstream — especially those of indigenous people and Afro-Americans. By working together we can move from celebration to commemoration, from hero-worship and bigotry to multi-culturalism and diversity.

Here are some ways you can get involved:

- 1 Find out how your tax dollars are being spent on 'official' Columbus celebrations in your country. Contact one of the 'action organizations' on this page for more information.
- 2 Ask your local library to purchase books

or periodicals that promote a more balanced view of Columbus and the European colonization of the Americas (see the **Worth Reading** suggestions on this page).

3 Plan local events and activities to bring out balanced perspectives on Columbus and ask for the sponsorship of school officials, politicians, teachers, unions and churches.

Suggestions include:

- classroom depictions of 1492 events from both native American and European perspectives
- library exhibits
- public ceremonies and discussions where Indian leaders are invited to speak about their concerns
- submit curriculum suggestions and reading lists to your school board for approval before autumn, 1992
- major conferences to bring activists and scholars on these issues to local universities and colleges
- start a support group to promote classroom and community discussion through local TV, radio and newspapers
- 4 Support organizations in your country that are helping to bring a more balanced perspective to these issues. See this page for further details

Groups Active in Anti-Columbus Planning

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ORGANIZATIONS

World Council of Indigenous People, 555 King Edward Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Tel (613) 230-9030, Fax (613) 230-9340. **Indigenous 500 Committee**, Secretaria Coperativa, Apt Postal 7B, Sucursal L Trebol, 01903, Guatemala City, Guatemala. **Assembly of First Nations**, 47 Clarence Street, Suite 300, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Tel (613) 236-0673, Fax (613) 238-5780. **International Indian Treaty Council**, 710 Clayton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117, US Tel (415) 566-0251. **National Congress of American Indians**, 840 D Street, Washington, DC 20002, US. **The American Indian Alliance for 1992**, c/o Richard Hill, American Indian Art Institute Museum, PO Box 2007, Sante Fe, NM, US 87504. **Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas del Ecuador**, Casilla Postal 92-C, Sucursal 15, Quito, Ecuador. **Indigenous Women's Network**, c/o Winona LaDuke, PO Box 174, Lake Elmo, MN, US 55402.

NON-INDIGENOUS GROUPS

CANADA / Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP), 3028 Danforth Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4C 1N2 Tel (416) 698-7770. **Aboriginal Rights**

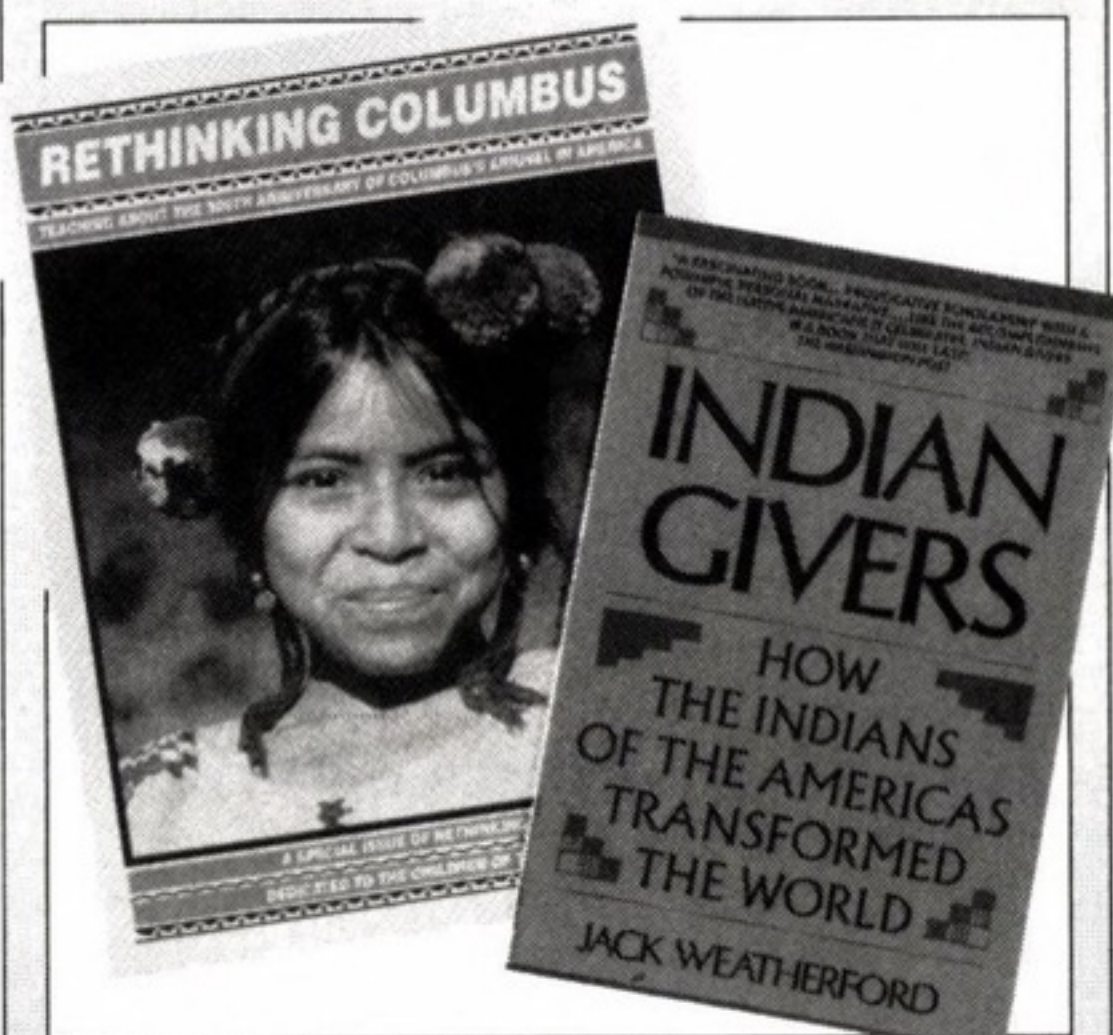
Coalition, 151 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N8 Tel (613) 235-9956. **Indigenous Peoples Support Network**, 356 Queens Avenue, London, Ontario N6B 1X6 Tel (519) 432-2123. **Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)**, 1 Nicholas Street, Suite 300, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B7.

US / South and Meso-American Indian Information Centre, PO Box 7550, Berkeley, CA, US 94707 Tel (415) 834-4263. **Arctic to Amazonia Alliance**, PO Box 73, Strafford, VT 05072 Tel (802) 765-4337 Fax (802) 765-4262. **National Council of Churches, Racial Justice Working Group**, 475 Riverside Drive, New York NY 10115 (212) 870-2298. **Columbus in Context**, c/o Philip Tajitsu Nash, 3941 Fairfax Square, Fairfax, VA US 22301 Tel (703) 352-5168.

UK / 500 Years of Resistance Campaign, Latin America Association, Kingsgate Place, London NW6 4TA. **Latin America Bureau**, 1 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UL. **Trocaire**, 169 Booterstown Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin, Ireland. **Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD)**, 2 Romero Close, Stockwell Road, London SW9 9TY. **Oxfam**, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.

Worth Reading on ... Columbus 500

Look for a torrent of books on the Columbus anniversary during the next year. In the meantime the following will likely remain among the best: **Indian Givers** (Ballantine Books, 1990) by Jack Weatherford explores how native Americans transformed the world; it's written with flair and insight and is a wonderful example of reclaiming lost history. Frederick Turner's **Beyond Geography** (Rutgers, 1983) is a brilliant and imaginative work looking at how the spiritual values that Europeans brought to the Americas led to the destruction of indigenous nations. Somewhat in the same vein is Kirkpatrick Sale's lucid **The Conquest of Paradise** (Knopf, 1990), a meticulously-researched piece of revisionist history which links Columbian values with environmental destruction. Monthly Review Press and Latin American Bureau have re-issued Hans Koning's **Columbus: His Enterprise Exploding the Myth** (1991), one of the best introductions to the Columbus controversy. **Faces of Latin America** by Duncan Green (Latin American Bureau, 1991) is a timely



round-up of the big issues facing Latin America 500 years after the 'Conquest' — nicely designed with some evocative bits of writing. **Time Among the Maya** (Penguin, 1989) by Ronald Wright is an engrossing piece of travel writing, perceptive, politically sharp and well-researched. Geoffrey York sketches a similar journalistic portrait of Canada's native people in **The Dispossessed** (Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), a searing analysis of neglect and racism. Eduardo Galeano's trilogy **Memories of Fire** (Methuen/UK and Pantheon/Canada & US, 1987) is a brilliant work of political fiction — a literate evocation of the history of the Americas, from pre-contact to the present day. Among a huge range of periodicals Nacla's **Report on the Americas** (475 Riverside Dr., Ste 454, New York, NY 10115) is essential for keen insights into current events in Latin America. Educators of all kinds should get a copy of **Rethinking Columbus**, a special issue of *Rethinking Schools* (1001 East Keefe Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53212, USA) geared towards teachers in the US but containing lots of useful resource tips and lesson suggestions for teachers elsewhere.

CHILDREN

Razor's edge

Killings continue in Brazil

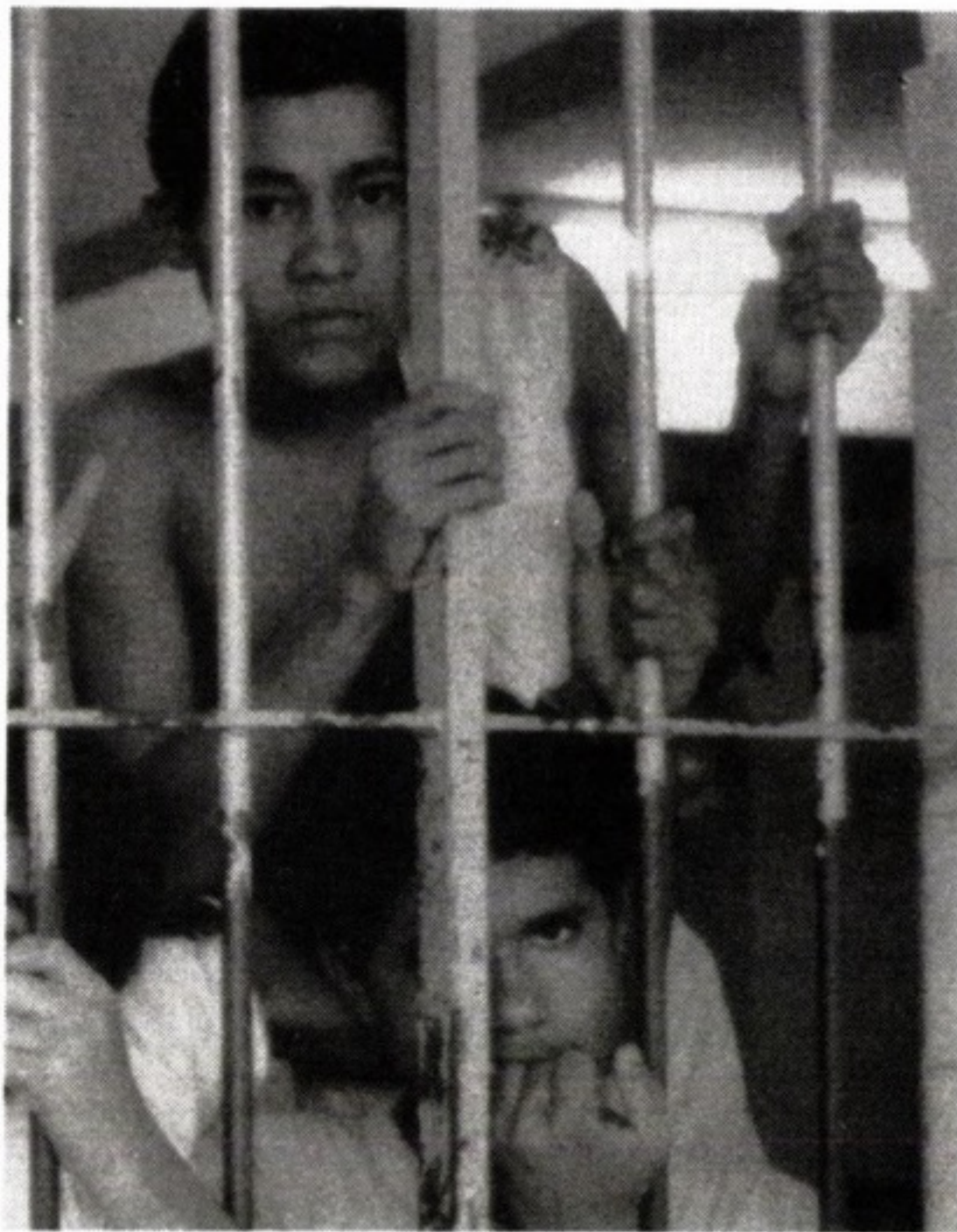
HE'S a scrawny, ten-year-old boy with a distant look in his eyes. He's lived half his life on Praça da Sé in downtown São Paulo, which is home to some 300 children and the backdrop to frequent violence and death. Sitting in the sun on park benches, sniffing glue or stealing fruit from street stalls, these children are precociously sceptical. 'Nobody can help us. I don't believe them anymore,' says the boy, who will not give his name.

In July 1990, Amnesty International reported on the torture and killing of Brazilian children by police officers and death squads. The report caused resentment in top political circles in Brazil – very little was done, despite the furore.

In July this year 30 children aged between 15 and 17 were murdered or died in armed confrontations with the police on the outskirts of São Paulo, according to a dossier published by *O Estado de São Paulo*. Pedro Franco de Campos, the Public Security Secretary of São Paulo state, staunchly denies the existence of organized death squads, inside or outside the police force. He also denies any knowledge of a confidential report on Brazil's seven million street children drawn up earlier this year by the federal police. The report says that 4,611 children have been killed over the past three years. In São Paulo alone 918 children were killed by fire arms, stabbing, beating, strangulation and even rape.

Dr Munir Cury, São Paulo's chief district attorney for children, says they are living on a razor's edge. 'There are death squads specializing in killing children and they most certainly are paramilitary organizations,' she says. She knows of many cases of killings by the military police.

Tired of constant hold-ups and theft, shop owners hire contract killers to 'clean up' their neighbourhoods. The children's



Children picked up from the streets, behind bars while they are screened. These centres are now outlawed in Brazil.

own families often play a part too. Half Brazil's 40 million children live in families with an aggregate income of no more than \$40 per month. For these families the birth of another child can mean an extra source of income as well as another mouth to feed.

According to the federal police report, street children as young as six years old are 'adopted' by adults and set to begging or selling bits and pieces at traffic lights. Sometimes addicted to glue sniffing as a sedative to hunger, such children are easy prey for drug traffickers, who supply them with glue and blackmail them into delivering drugs. They eventually join teenage armed groups and enter the drug trade themselves, competing with other organized street gangs – or even with the police.

Fabiene Rocha/São Paulo

UNICEF have published *Brazil: the Fight for Childhood in the City*, by Anthony Swift, an excellent brief study available from UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Piazza SS Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy.

Stealth condom confusion

The Northrop Corporation and maker of the M7 Stealth Bomber is suing a small condom company for alleged trademark infringement. US-based Stealth Condoms sells red, white and blue condoms in packages shaped like the Stealth Bomber, with the motto 'They'll Never See You Coming'. Northrop Corporation claims that by using the name *Stealth*, the condom company 'is likely to cause confusion, to cause mistake, or to deceive'. Northrop also fears that its products will be held in 'disrepute' because of the condom use of its name. The owner of Stealth Condoms Inc commented, 'We offer a heck of a lot more protection than the Stealth Bomber, at a lot less cost'.

Women's Health Journal, Chile, June 1991

Harmless

A mass rape at a mixed Catholic boarding school in Kenya last July, which left 19 schoolgirls dead, has raised a storm of condemnation. But no-one could accuse the deputy headmistress, Joyce Kithiira, of not standing by her men. 'They meant no harm,' she said. 'They just wanted to rape.'

The Independent, London, 30 September, 1991.

Pick a peck of poison

African countries should refuse many of the donated pesticides they receive, says a scientist from the US Environment Protection Agency. Many of these aid imports are never used, and disposing of



them is a growing problem. It is estimated some 7,000 tonnes of surplus pesticides have accumulated in Africa. Morocco with 2,000 tonnes and Sudan with 1,000 tonnes have the greatest stocks.

In 1987 Japan sent Sudan a shipment of methyl bromide, a corn fumigant. This was larger than the projected 10-year demand for the chemical in the country. Sudan now has to get rid of the excess. Japan sometimes requires a recipient country to accept pesticide donations as part of an aid package which includes highly-prized tractors. Benin and Guinea-Bissau have found that such packages of aid have left them stocks of dimethoate and other chemicals that far exceed demand. Other pesticide stocks are left over from campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s against locusts and mosquitoes, and are now rotting away in leaking barrels at storage sites.

New Scientist No 1786 1991

Sharks gather round socialist Cuba



The withdrawal of Soviet subsidies and troops from Cuba is prompting predictions of the imminent collapse of the Castro regime. Fidel Castro has so far showed no signs of making any concessions at all to the 'New World Order' or perestroika.

GIL HANLY



'All my own work'; the result of Alain Mafart's bombing in Auckland harbour the day after.

To bomb Greenpeace and be made a Knight

France has awarded a medal to the man convicted of bombing the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in Auckland, Aotearoa. Lieutenant Colonel Alain Mafart is to be made a Knight of the Order of Merit, according to *Le Figaro*. 'Giving an Order of Merit obviously for exemplary military service to a person convicted of manslaughter in a New Zealand court and sent to jail is frankly disgusting,' according to New Zealand Foreign Minister Don McKinnon. Mafart was a major in the Direction Generale de la Securite Extérieure, and part of a team of agents who planted a bomb on Rainbow Warrior on July 10, 1985, just before it was due to sail to the French nuclear testing site at Mururoa Atoll. Killed in the blast was Fernando Pereira, a Dutch Greenpeace activist. This year there have been six underground nuclear blasts at that same atoll.

Rainforest action

'We will stop destroying rainforests - but not yet.' This is the policy of the B & Q British chain of DIY stores. Following pressure from Rainforest Action Groups, B & Q have adopted a deadline set by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and will only sell 'sustainably produced' rainforest timber after 1995. While WWF are pleased with this 'responsible stance on the environment', Rainforest Action Groups who have been regularly picketing B & Q stores are not so happy.

'If B & Q can stop selling unsustainable tropical timber in four years time, they can stop now,' says a Rainforest Action Group spokesperson. This was followed up with 'Who gave WWF the right to sanction wholesale extinction for another four years? 1995 is an entirely arbitrary date. The only rational deadline is now.'

For more information contact: London Rainforest Action Group, 9 Cazenove Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 6PA.



Brazilian settler clearing forest for his homestead.

JULIO ETCHART

HUMAN RIGHTS

Nobel Suu Kyi

Prize spotlights repression in Burma

THE award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize to Aung San Suu Kyi has focussed much-needed attention on Burma, a country that has increasingly turned its back on the world since independence in 1948. Foreign journalists are banned and the few foreign workers are confined to special quarters from which no radios or newspapers may be removed.

About 12,000 people are thought to be held on political charges. Some 15,000 people have been moved out of their homes in Rangoon and relocated in 'new towns' on the edge of the city. Tribal villages have been burned down and the people forced to move to areas under strict military control. An estimated 60,000 people, mostly from Karen and Mon ethnic villages, have fled into neighbouring Thailand. A further 20,000 are living as refugees in India, Bangladesh and China.

Huge logging, oil and fishing concessions have been offered to foreign firms. Every day between 80 and 100 trucks, each carrying 35 tons of Burmese teak and other hardwoods, cross into Thailand. The exiled opposition group BURMA lists more than 200 firms, predominantly from Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea which have major investments in extractive industries in Burma.

Aung San Suu Kyi returned to the country from Britain to care for her ailing mother in 1988. The daughter of Burma's most celebrated independence hero, she was asked to lead the opposition to the military regime in elections promised for the following year. In July 1989 she was banned from talking to anyone and placed under house arrest. When



BURMA ACTION GROUP

Aung San Suu Kyi leads opposition to the Burmese military.

the elections did take place, in May 1990, the opposition National League for Democracy won more than 80 per cent of the seats in Congress. The military Junta conceded defeat but held onto power and intensified its repression.

The European Community has urged Asian countries to join a ban on arms sales. The UN Secretary General has called for the release of Suu Kyi. The Junta demands that she should renounce her opposition and leave the country. This she refuses to do. Her nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize was made by two people with similar experiences - President Vaclav Harvel and Alexander Dubcek of Czechoslovakia. ■

Report compiled by David Ransom from information supplied by the Burma Action Group, 1a Bonny Street, London NW1 9PE, UK (tel 071 267 9660) and the Burma Rights Group for Action (BURMA), PO Box 1976, Silom Post Office, Bangkok 10504, Thailand. Contact them for information on the campaign for democracy and human rights in Burma.

LIBYA

Gaddafi's pipe dream

Greening the desert

MOAMMAR Gaddafi's grand scheme to pump billions of gallons of water from beneath Libya's desert to farmland on the coast has met with partial success. The first phase of the \$25 billion project has laid nearly two thousand kilometres of pipe big enough to drive a car through. It was inaugurated in September. There is no lack of hyperbole behind the massive project, billed as 'one of the biggest African construction projects since the pyramids'.

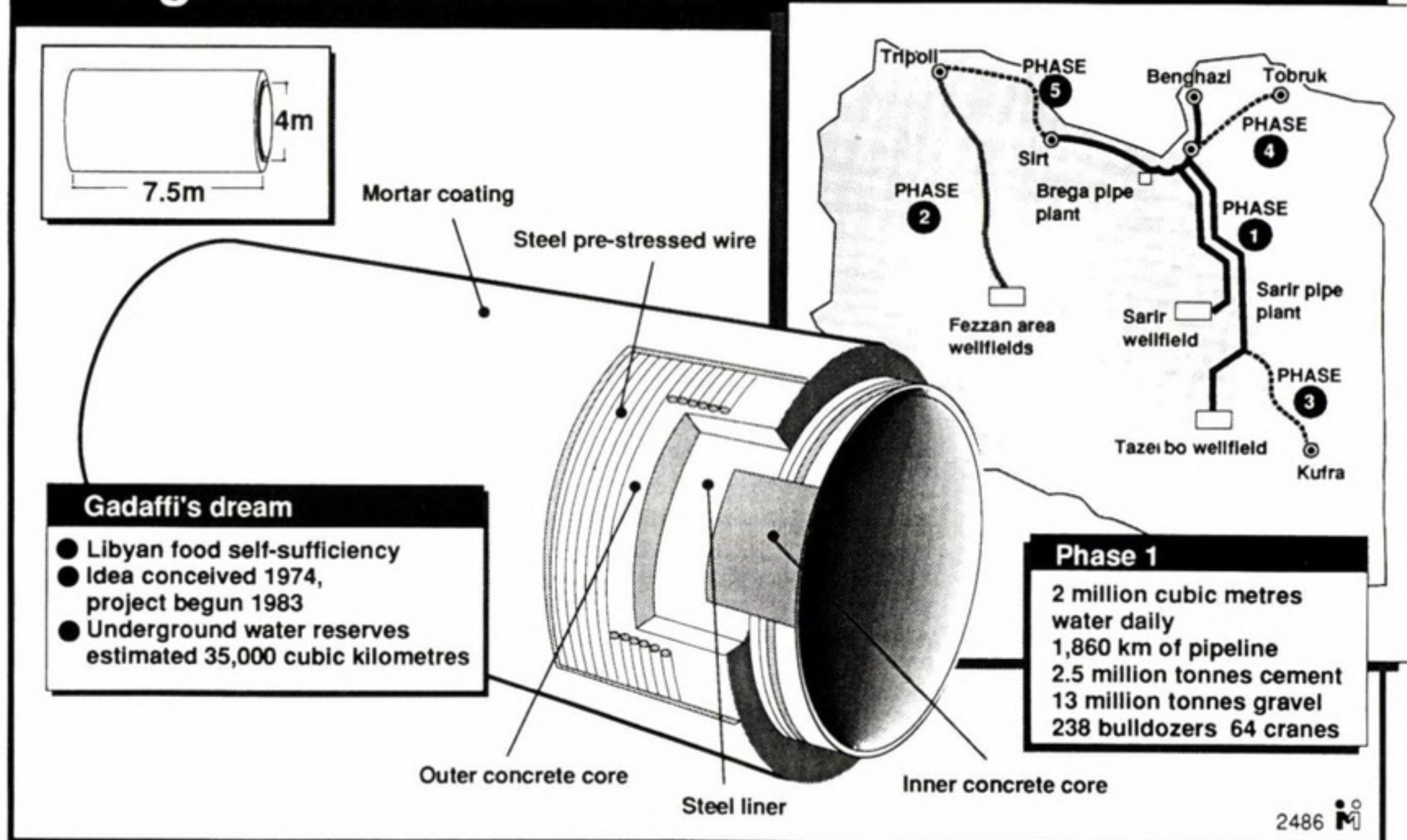
Officially it is called 'the Great Manmade River' (with all the sexism that implies). Yet it is a pipeline. And what a pipeline. Some 1,900 kilometres so far, or 250,000 of the 80 tonne concrete and wire pipe sections all laid end-to-end beneath the desert. This artificial river is as long as the

The project is tapping vast reserves of water discovered beneath the Sahara by oil prospectors. Much of the water percolated through the sandstone to impervious rocks about 30,000 years ago during the last ice age. Then, what is now a desert was a land of tall grasses and crocodile-infested swamps.

Environmentalists are worried that within 50 years they may well have taken out so much water, the wells will run dry. And Egypt protested too, claiming some of the water was theirs. However when Gaddafi argued that the resulting irrigation on the coastal farms would provide jobs for a million immigrant Egyptian farmworkers, Cairo's protest stopped.

As long as the oil money does not run out, work will continue well into the next

The great artificial river



Rhine and brings two million cubic metres of water each day from more than 200 wells sunk far inland to coastal farms. There, existing underground water supplies have almost run out.

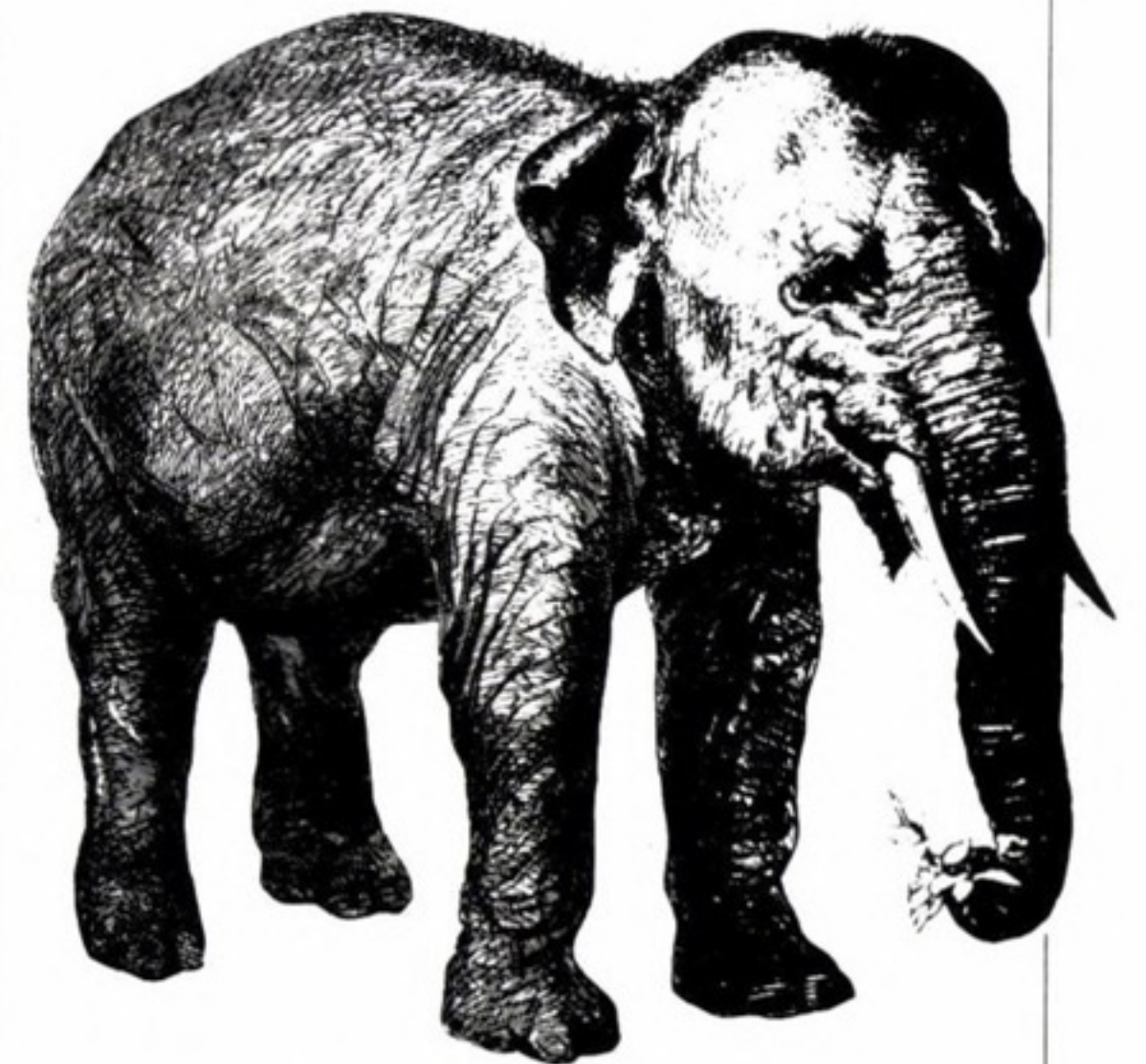
Work on the project, overseen by South Korean construction giant Dong Ah, began in 1983. For much of the 1980s this was the largest civil engineering project in the world. More bulldozers and excavators were assembled in Libya than had ever been brought together in one place. The work involved assembling pipe construction plants, building roads to transport the pipe sections, digging, scraping and blasting the 1,900 kilometres of seven-metre deep trench in which to lay the pipe, and the construction of pumping stations and vast reservoirs to control the water flow.

century towards the goal of food self-sufficiency for Libya. The aim is to eventually irrigate 2,000 square kilometres of the country and produce more than a million tonnes of wheat a year and make the rainless country an exporter of food.

Whether more food exports are needed is another matter. The European Community, Australian and North American grain and meat surpluses are already an embarrassment. However the Korean contracting company is credited with doing a superb construction job under terrible desert conditions. And there are a lot worse things for Arab oil money to be spent on than bringing water and food to the community. ■

Allan Thompson/Gemini

Stand and deliver



Elephants have been holding up cars and lorries on national highway Number 39 in Assam, north-east India, in search of fruit – particularly sugar cane and bananas. At first the elephants fed on sugar cane stalks fallen from passing trucks. Then the wild animals started approaching vehicles. Gradually drivers started carrying fruit for them. When tourists heard about this, they began making detours to see and feed the beasts.

The natural concord was broken earlier this year when a truck driver offered bananas to a lone elephant and panicked when his hand was taken along with the fruit. His screams frightened the elephant and the jumbo ran away with the bananas and the hand. On further occasions drivers who did not pay up when being confronted by the animals with trunks outstretched, found their cars being shoved to the side of the road.

Now vehicles travel in convoys with armed escorts. Ahead of the convoys will go tame elephants to see off any of their wild counterparts that might be lingering with intent.

Panos Briefs

END

Quote

"Human wrongdoing is inextricably linked to social deprivation, poverty, poor housing and illiteracy."

George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, on inner city rioting in Britain.

"Spending \$1 billion on guided missile production creates about 12,100 jobs. But spending the same amount on pollution control yields 22,000 jobs and on education 84,700 jobs."

The Pacifist.



The agony of a doomed love. Li Wei and Gong Li in the beautiful film that China disowned – *Ju Dou*.



Ju Dou

directed by Zhang Yimou

One of the great injustices of the year in film was the fact that Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou* was denied the Oscar for Best Foreign-Language Film. Xavier Koller's more topical but rather manipulative *Journey of Hope* took the laurels with its protest at the plight of Turkish refugees running foul of Swiss immigration laws. Koller's film never really took flight away from the territory of news. *Ju Dou*, on the other hand, was far more powerfully cinematic, and the fact that it was disowned by its country of origin, China, made its failure to win all the more disappointing.

Ju Dou is set in a small Chinese rural town in the 1920s, where a tyrannical old man runs a dyeing plant, working his com-

pliant young nephew to the bone. The young man timidly falls for his uncle's new bride Ju Dou who, like her predecessors, is treated mercilessly by the old reprobate. As the two young people befriend each other, illicit romance and revenge cannot be far off. For Western audiences, the familiarity of the theme – which could have been taken directly from a Zola novel – merely adds piquancy to a tragedy that takes its remorseless logic from the stern social laws of Chinese tradition.

The story's peculiar power derives from the visual charge given to it by Zhang, who previously directed *Red Sorghum*. The conflict between the young lovers and their tormentors takes place in the claustrophobic confines of the plant, whose long unfurling rolls of tissue and stridently coloured dye pools combine to intense emotional and symbolic effect. Cruel as it is, *Ju Dou* is a very beautiful film and, with the finely tuned performances of Gong Li and Li Wei as the doomed couple, sometimes a

very erotic one.

That eroticism was certainly one of the factors that upset the Chinese authorities. China's Minister of Film and Television declared that only films which implemented the Party line could be considered for export. The film was banned in China on the grounds of its sexual content – the Minister complained 'There are too many bandits, prostitutes, eunuchs and spies on the Chinese screen'.

But commentators speculated that the film also incurred disapproval because it could be read as an allegory of contemporary China, with a younger generation held under the thumb of a conservative patriarchy. It has remained unseen in its home-country, despite a petition to the Chinese Government by US filmmakers, including Woody Allen and Oliver Stone. Zhang, however, has since completed a new film with Hong Kong backing – *Raise the Red Lantern*, to be released in the New Year. Meanwhile *Ju Dou* can still be seen on the repertory circuit and is not to be missed.

Politics ☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆



An image just to celebrate *South*, a trail-blazing UK Channel Four series which has showcased short films by directors from developing countries. Animation, music, video and fiction as well as documentaries both light and heavy – TV has never given a better sense of the richness and diversity of Southern culture. Look out for it on SBS in Australia next year.



book of the year

Top Guns & Toxic Whales

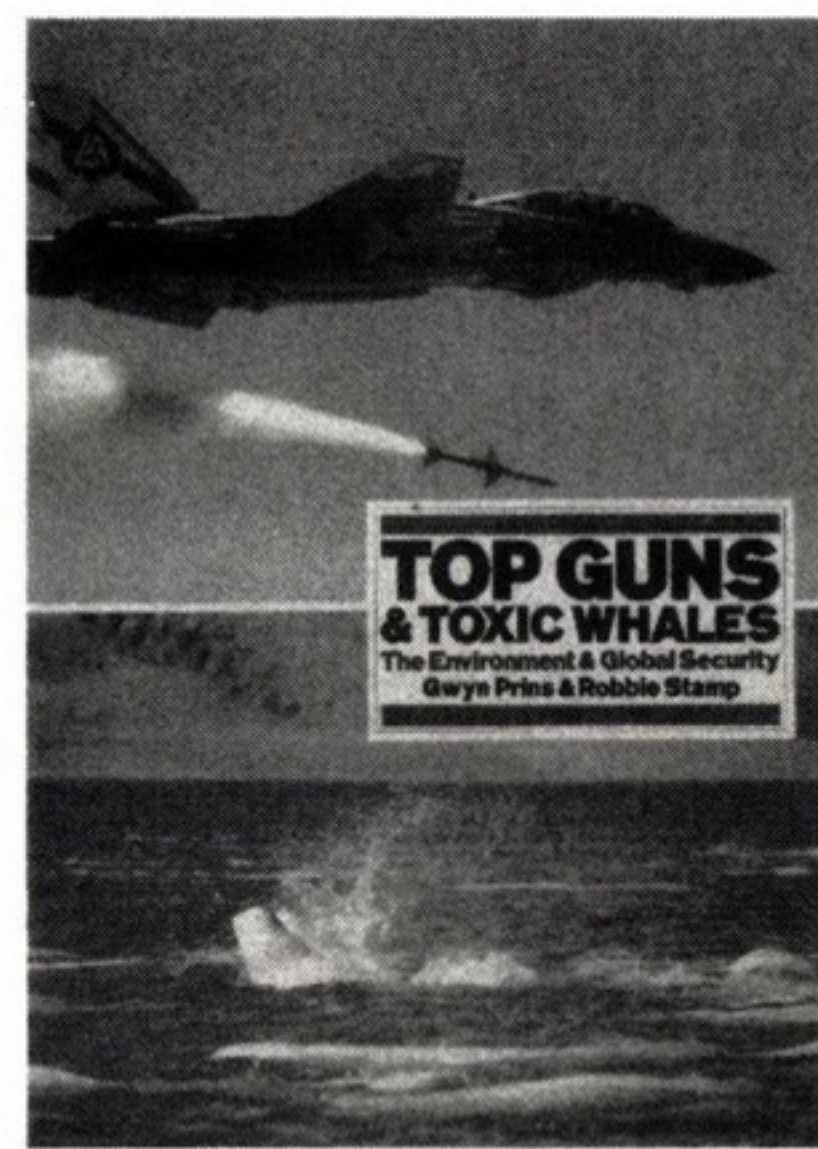
by Gwyn Prins and Robbie Stamp
(Earthscan)

'The book of the TV film or series' is not usually the most promising of forms. *Top Guns & Toxic Whales* is an excellent exception. Its genesis lies in the last of a prize-winning trilogy of

documentaries on key environmental questions by Lawrence Moore; its forerunners being *Can Polar Bears Tread Water* (on global warming) and *When the Bough Breaks* (on the plight of children worldwide).

The book is lavishly but intelligently illustrated, with explanatory charts and extra-planetary photography alongside the full-colour setpiece shots. Given its origins in a visual form, this is possibly the easy part. But Gwyn Prins' writing, too, lives up to the promise of the snappy title, consistently entertaining even when dealing with tricky intellectual territory.

At the start, for example, you are planted in the cockpit of an F-14A Tomcat fighter and then whisked behind a pram in the middle of a polluted industrial city. The fighter is built to register oncoming threats by use of the most sophisticated technology humans have come up with. It is the ultimate expression of a whole world view based on national security which suddenly finds itself in the last decade of the century without foundation. The key enemies are now not those that the *Top Gun* fighter is built to register but those that the pram would signal if it were equipped



with similar high technology: the environmental threats to planetary and personal security.

The idea of 'green wars' – battles over shrinking natural resources like water – seems to be taking hold as we refocus our worries while the Cold War recedes into history. That aside, the core material of the book is not new. We are steered through *Limits to Growth* and the Brundtland Commission, *World Military and Social Expenditures* and an enhanced United Nations, a round that will be familiar to Greens and peace campaigners alike. But there have been few more able or interesting guides offering this particular package tour to our own salvation.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆



music
of the year

Metamorphosis

by World Saxophone Quartet and
African Drums (Elektra/Nonesuch)



Bravura blowing: Arthur Blythe.

The tradition of jazz paying homage to its African origins is as old as jazz itself. But at a time when awareness of world musics is more widespread than ever in the West – when half-baked ideas of 'Africanism' are bandied about with impunity – there's an even more pressing need to re-examine jazz's relation to its roots.

Metamorphosis may not in itself be a new departure but it's an exceptionally powerful reaffirmation of jazz improvisation's debt to African rhythm. US horn heavyweights Oliver Lake, Arthur Blythe, David Murray and Hamiet Bluiett have teamed up with three African drummers – Chief Bey, Mar Gueye and Mor Thiam (who shares some of the composing credits). The undiluted reediness of sax quartets often makes for an arid, over-orderly sound, but the drums and occasional bass here provide a firm bedrock for both the unison chording and the *bravura salvos* of blowing.

The arrangements work best when drums and sax are at odds with each other, when the percussion is more than just backing – notably on Murray's lugubriously elegant *Ballad for the Black Man*. African themes colour the melody too in Lake's occasional flute, and in Black's title track, which takes a cue from South African *kwela*. As an enjoyable mixture of free-form blowing and melodic invention, this muscular, accessible set takes some beating.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

STAR RATING

Excellent ★★★★★
Very good ★★★★★
Good ★★★★★
Fair ★★★★★
Poor ★★★★★

War with the Newts

... being the science-fiction book
that helps put the Gulf War in perspective

THE impact of certain historical events makes it possible to read books in ways that could not have been previously imagined. When I re-encountered Karel Capek's science-fiction classic **War with the Newts** towards the end of the Gulf War, what I had originally viewed as an amusing fantasy was transformed by the distressingly belligerent world climate into a profound and biting satire on global capitalism and the politics which sustain it. Although published (in Czech) in 1936, the novel, both in form and content, would strike any reader as notably contemporary. I certainly closed it with a better understanding of the issues behind the Gulf Conflict than all of the journalism I was watching and reading at the time provided.

Jan Van Toch, a merchant sea captain, is pearl hunting in an Indian Ocean archipelago. He discovers a group of oversize amphibian salamanders, which are not only trusting but also exceedingly compliant and, furthermore, seem to



have some kind of rudimentary speech. Oysters are a delicacy for the water lizards but they have difficulty opening the shells with their thumbless paws. So they bring them ashore to Van Toch, who opens the shells for them, removes any pearls inside, and hands the remainder over for the newts to eat.

This simple and mutually advantageous social compact has little chance of survival in a world where the profit motive is the major drive. Van Toch, realizing that he has blundered upon the most efficient pearl production system imaginable, trains the newts to work for him and then sells them into slavery to a multinational corporation. From this moment the newts become cogs in the wheels of global economic exchange except that, unlike human workers, they are accorded no legal or civil rights whatever. Their reproduction and settlement is determined solely by their capitalist owners and their intelligence is exploited to extend the variety of tasks they are made to perform in the furtherance of corporate avarice.

The humour of the novel emerges from the readjustments human society has to make when this major new labour force is introduced. One of the problems, for instance, is that the newts evolve at an alarming rate when placed in new environments. They thus learn human speech and acquire literacy very rapidly. This occasions debate as to whether their approximation to

human form and culture should allow them to be acknowledged as members of religious communities of their own choosing. The nature and extent of newt education becomes a burning issue in the legislative assemblies of most nations.

The newts produce such a surplus of material goods that the markets become super-saturated, the capitalist world order is threatened and human trade unionists begin to wage campaigns to have their manufacturing activities strictly limited. Eventually uncheckable, salamander procreation booms and newt leaders emerge, making demands on behalf of a seaborne population which is far in excess of that which inhabits the land. Territorial conferences are held, terms are dictated to the newts which they find unsatisfactory and ultimately, armed with sophisticated weapons of human design but their own making, the newts begin to bombard the land masses with the intention of enlarging their own habitat. The novel closes with a united humanity trying desperately to get the newts to fight among themselves so that its own extermination might be avoided.

This political fable could be applied to many features of recent world history, from environmental disaster to the nuclear arms race. In its concern with the fortunes of one entire population exploited and oppressed by another, however, it is more clearly a parable addressing the Jewish Holocaust being relentlessly pursued in neighbouring Germany at the time Capek was writing.

But imperialism, broadly, is the main target of **War with the Newts**. Van Toch, after all, is working in the colonial Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). Discovering a source of great wealth, he instigates a process whereby the indigenous population (of newts) is marshalled and corralled into forms of living and working which will allow their colonial dominators to reap the maximum benefit. When the newts become conscious of their own oppression and begin to redress the balance, they are accused of being 'terrorists' and the League of Nations unites against them.

It is not difficult to see the parallel with Arab history in this century. To ensure the free flow of oil, Western states established post-colonial dominions by drawing lines in the sand and provided their approved Arab leaders with the arms and expertise to suppress any local unrest. When this so-called 'order' showed signs of cracking up under the strain of the regional tensions the West had imposed upon it, the United Nations was the rallying forum and the West acted quickly and savagely to put down the challenge to its authority. It is still doing so.

Now a book which helps us to see recent Jewish and Arab experience as essentially the same kinds of historical processes, and simultaneously manages to be the reverse of depressing, just has to be worth reading, don't you think? ■

Macdonald Daly

War with the Newts by Karel Capek (1936, published in English now by Unwin).



QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'curiosities'.

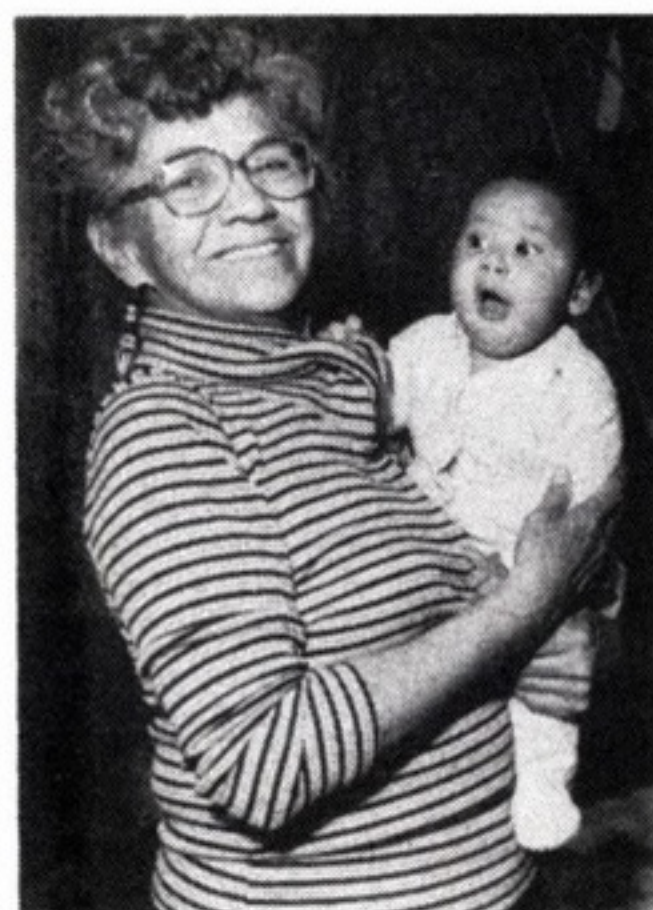
Why does the British National Front promote Colonel Gaddafi's *Little Green Book*?



● The British National Front (NF) support for Gaddafi came from a small section which called itself the Third Position, whose members wanted to get international status by supporting any party or regime that claimed to have nationalist principles. It led them to back the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Colonel Gaddafi, the Ayatollah Khomeini and Saddam Hussein. But such support for Third World leaders and political groups should fool no-one about the racism that underlies National Front political philosophy.

Malcolm Greener, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK

Are there any matriarchal societies in the world today?



● Contrary to the answer given in NI 223 I would suggest that at least one such society is alive and kicking in Canada and the United States. Mohawk Indian society is fiercely and proudly matriarchal.

Canadians observed this in the summer of 1990 when a group of armed Mohawks seized an ancestral burial ground in Oka, Quebec, earmarked for development as a golf course. I'm no expert but I gathered from media reports that ultimate political power among the Mohawks rested among formidable Clan Mothers. Television footage showed these middle-aged women asserting control over gun-toting Mohawk Warriors. And they were just as assertive with the Canadian soldiers on the

other side of the firing line.

These women are credited with preventing much bloodshed during the Oka Crisis. I gather any would-be male Mohawk politician fears and respects them.

Sean Prpick, Regina, Canada

Which of the world's religions is the most anti-sex? And which the most in favour?

● If Dick Johnson had read the *Confessions of St Augustine of Hippo* he would know that Augustine was the last person to deserve an accusation of hypocrisy. He certainly had a bit of hang-up about sex but his sex-obsessed youth as a Manichee was well over before he started writing on the subject. He was a student of 19 when he joined the Manichean sect, which believed that the whole material world was created by an evil spirit and whose rejection of all sexual activity was so fierce that most members delayed full adherence until they were dying! But after nine years Augustine left the sect, disillusioned and totally sceptical. His conversion to Christianity was not completed until age 33 when he had ended his liaison with a woman – with sadness on both sides.

AA Barton, London, UK

● In response to Dick Johnson's reply in NI 224, Muhammad was emphatically *not* a sensual man. At the age of 25 he married a twice-widowed woman 15 years his senior with whom he stayed until her death 25 years later. Subsequently he continued to live ascetically, but married – in succession – widows of his followers killed in battle and female war captives, thus releasing them from slavery.

Zahra Adewusi, London, UK

Why do they wear bowler hats in Bolivia?

● The story I've heard is that a shipment of bowler hats was sent from Europe to Bolivia via Peru for use by Europeans who were working on the construction of the railroad. The hats were found to be too small and were distributed to locals.

Jeff Serf, Sutton Coldfield, UK

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS:

● I've heard it said that Ludwig van Beethoven was black. Is there any truth in this?

Esther Ferguson, London, UK

● Why do nomads in the Sahara wear dark colours when light colours are supposed to be cooler?

Alan Davidson, Tipton, UK

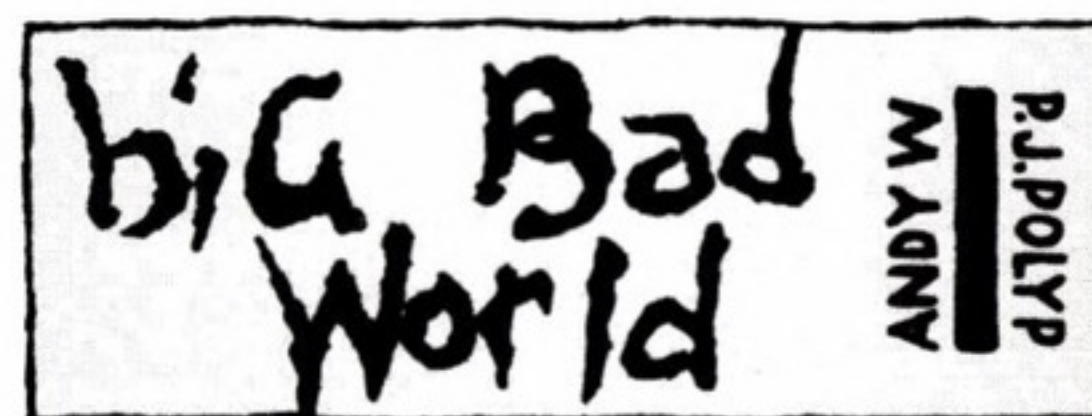
● I understand that there is an African tree that explodes. Does anyone know which – and why?

Frances Smith, Brisbane, Australia

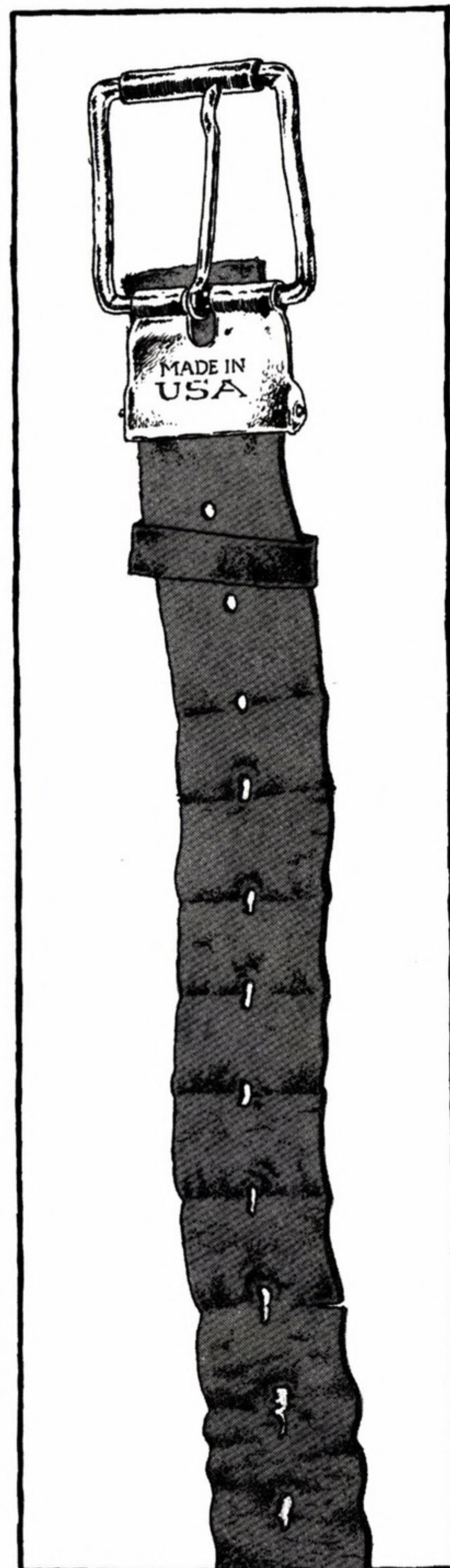
● What are the origins of the Panama hat?

Janet Merton, Dublin, Eire

If you have any questions please send them to **Curiosities, New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK**, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).



THE BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO I.M.F. ECONOMIC POLICY



Seeking truth in Palestine

As a teenager Elizabeth Graham-Yooll visited a land called Palestine. This year, aged 77, she returned to the same place – now the Israeli Occupied Territories. Her motive – to find out what the press and the politicians were not telling her.

I HAVE never written for a magazine before but I feel I must express my deep concern about what is going on in the West Bank and Gaza – and the apparent indifference of both the press and politicians in the West.

I feel that there will be no peace settlement in the Middle East unless the human rights abuses that are happening now are addressed – and that means bringing the truth out into the open.

It's easier said than done. United Nations observers who wanted to look at the human rights situation were refused entry to the Occupied Territories last year. Organizations like Amnesty International find it difficult to operate in Israel, while journalists leaving the country are interrogated at the airport and often have their notebooks seized if they are found to contain critical material.

After speaking with a journalist acquaintance I became even more infuriated by the lack of information coming through the media. I got a vague sense of what was going on from women I had come into contact with in the Women's Organization for Political Prisoners. So I decided there was only one thing for it – I would have to go back to Palestine and see for myself.

It was 60 years since I had last visited the area, to stay with my aunt who was working there to improve conditions for women prisoners. Most people I knew strongly advised me against returning. A 77-year-old woman should not be travelling on her own in such dangerous parts. I ignored their advice.

I encountered difficulties with soldiers and guns and curfews, of course. On one occasion I had to furtively climb over the eight-foot wall of a refugee camp in Bethlehem in order to talk to a 14-year-old girl who had been imprisoned for wearing Palestinian colours on her dress.

But wherever I went I was greeted warmly by Palestinians. The families I visited said they wished more people would visit them. In the refugee camps in Gaza I heard no self-pity – not even hostility towards Israelis. I found courage and resilience and a determination to make the best of things. For example, the single 10-foot-square room in which a refugee family was expected to live was kept spotlessly clean.

I learned that there are 800,000 refugees in Gaza and that since 1987 nearly 400 Palestinian homes have been demolished and 261 sealed. This is the general practice in the Occupied Territories. The homes are demolished at night without warning, the soldiers arriving with bulldozers and leaving the family sitting by the roadside or scrabbling in the rubble to retrieve a prized possession. There is nothing anyone can do to help them. And the land, tenderly cultivated with olive and orange groves, may also be bulldozed to create new settlements to house foreigners.

But far worse are the physical abuses. I discovered that almost everyone goes to prison at one time or the other. It is an accepted fact of life. Most people are held without charge, with no recourse to law or medical help. To be arrested all they have to do is to be seen in a group talking, or wear Palestinian colours on their clothes.

On arriving at prison they are usually prevented from sleeping for several days. The prisoners are made to stand against a wall with hands manacled behind them and with a hood over their

heads. If they fall or faint they are clubbed, or their heads banged against the wall. Before being released they are asked to sign a form declaring they are terrorists. Refusal to do so means a longer period in prison.

At the end of their imprisonment they have to pay a fine. Since most have no jobs they are assigned employment with Israeli firms, for which they get minimum payment. Two young men I met – who had been at university before it had been closed down – told me that to help them pay their fine they had to sew garments for an Israeli business person. These young men would be working for three years to pay off their fine.



Elizabeth Graham-Yooll with a baby imprisoned for a year with his mother. The crime: possession of an offensive weapon – a needle.

I heard of so many abuses – and so many mechanisms for abuse. But it was in the Al Alhi hospital that I became most painfully aware of how bad things are. There I was shown the rubber and plastic bullets, which often contain sharp metal pellets that travel around the body so fast they cannot be located or removed. I saw huge gas canisters that were thrown into the small homes causing enormous suffering, sometimes death.

Hospital staff – among them several young British doctors and nurses – gave me the appalling statistics. In 1990 alone the hospital dealt with 705 live gunshot wounds, 375 wounds from rubber and plastic bullets, 1,551 beatings, and 281 victims of gas attacks. And so many of the victims – 979 – were children. The average age of children killed by Israeli soldiers was 12 years old and 40 per cent of the children killed died less than 10 metres away from their homes. In 39 per cent of the cases medical help to the dying children was delayed and obstructed by soldiers.

This is a terrible record. I have just set down what I saw and heard during my visit to Gaza and the West Bank. And I have to conclude that I fear very greatly for the safety of all Palestinians in any peace agreement. ■

Elizabeth Graham-Yooll lives in Salisbury, UK.

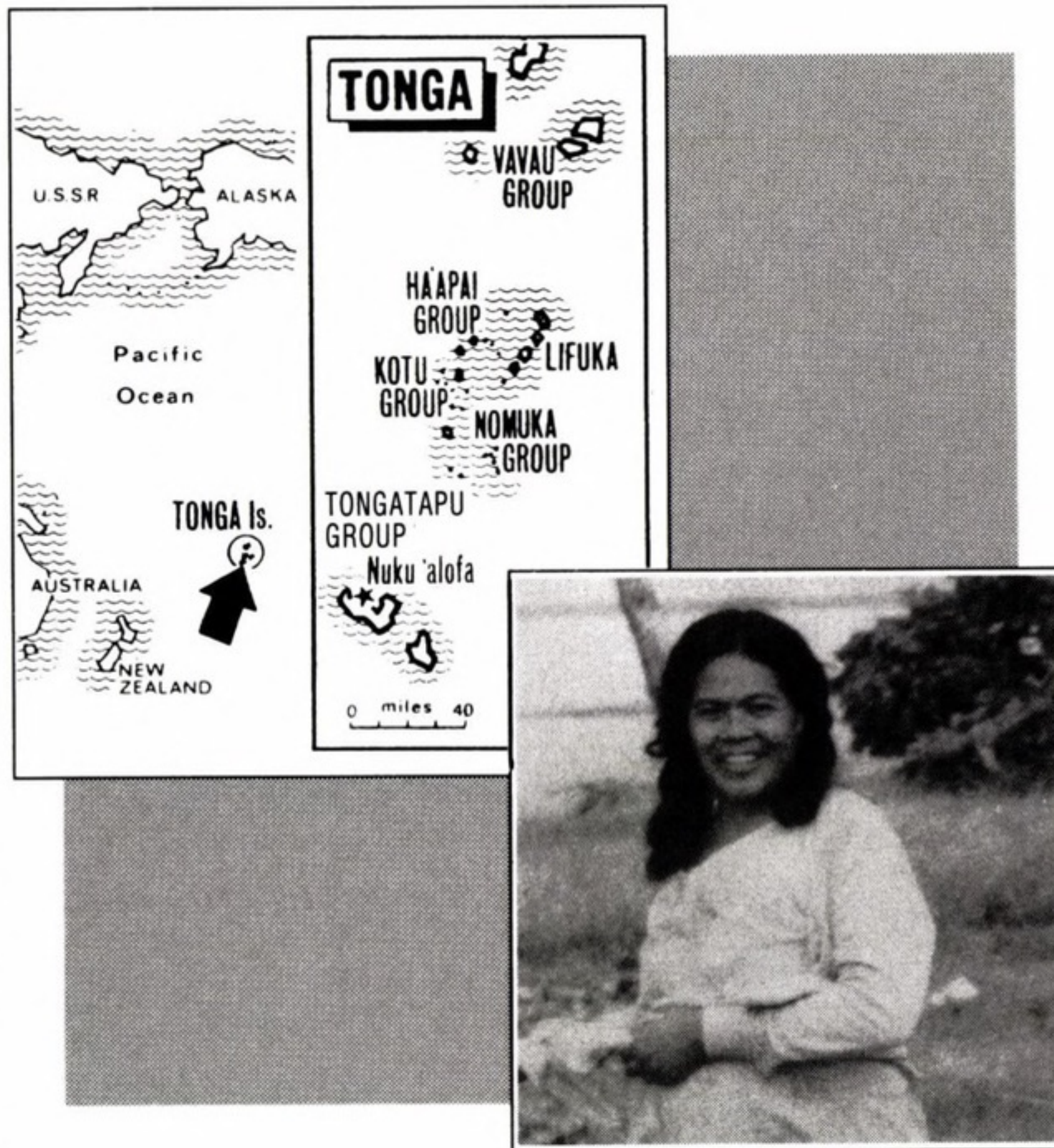
Tonga

TONGA is literally the place where time begins – as the first country west of the International Dateline in the Pacific. But an increasing proportion of its 100,000 people see it also as a place where time stands still.

The country is an archipelago with a scatter of some 170 volcanic and coral islands. About 70 per cent of the population lives on the main island of Tongatapu; that is, 70 per cent of the Tongans who still live on the islands. Another 40,000 or more are overseas and their remittances form the bulk of Tonga's foreign exchange earnings.

The islands were settled by Polynesians arriving from south-east Asia about 2,500 years ago. They have never – technically at least – been colonized. Tonga survives as the last remaining Polynesian kingdom, where once its fortunes were measured against the comparative power and influence of the other great sea-going military Polynesian kingdoms – in Hawaii, Samoa, Tahiti and New Zealand.

Tonga's first contact with the West came through Dutch navigators Schouten and Lemaire in 1616. Captain Cook – whose name for Tonga was the Friendly Isles – visited in 1773



and then came the Wesleyan Missionaries. After this, the pace of change quickened.

In 1862 King George Tupou I abolished slavery and in 1875 a constitution was drawn up. To avoid German colonization Tonga became a British Protectorate in 1900, the status it held until full independence

in 1970.

All land in the country remains under the control of the royal family and the 33 noble families, who also dominate the Parliament. But change is on the way – spearheaded by a handful of well-educated younger Tongan commoners who have returned after their

foreign education.

The leading commoner MP, Akilisi Pohiva, has broken with tradition by accusing nobles and a member of the royal family of corruption. This related to the sale of Tongan passports to foreigners – mainly from Hong Kong – and to a deal under discussion with an American company to dump waste in the country.

King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, aged 73, is a conservative, gentle and pious ruler who has retained many of the trappings of the British royalty acquired during the 200 years of contact between the nations. He appoints the Cabinet.

His son Crown Prince Tupouto'a, a graduate of Oxford and Sandhurst, is the country's highly articulate anglophile Foreign Minister, who tends to give the impression that his home islands are unable to contain his broader world view. It is likely that when he ascends the throne, the pace of change will accelerate and the likes of Pohiva will be given their chance to sample some real power and responsibility – just as democratic change is also sweeping the neighbouring Polynesian nation of Western Samoa.

Rowan Callick

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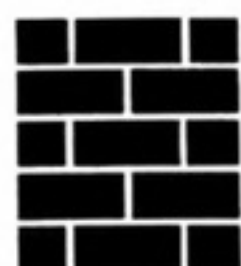
AT A glance

Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★



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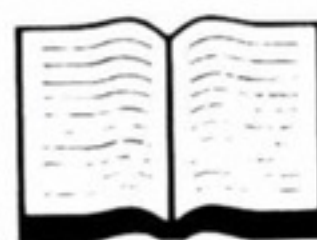
POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★

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LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

Good, at 66 years (US 76 years).

Leader King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV

Economy GNP per capita: US \$830 (US \$19,840)

Monetary unit: Pa'anga

Tonga has recently established its own Reserve Bank – symbolic of its intention to become more self-reliant; the pa'anga now floats against a basket of world currencies; it was previously fixed at par with the Australian dollar. Remittances and aid form about 28 per cent of GNP; attempts made to diversify into industry, tourism and new export crops like squash and vanilla. Subsistence crops are yams and breadfruit.

People 100,000 (52 per cent below 20 years old).

Health 26 per 1,000 live births (US 12 per 1,000)

Culture Polynesian. The high level of literacy, the great pressure for land due to population growth, and increased overseas travel and communications, are leading to a gradual erosion of respect for the hierarchical structures. But criticism has focused on nobles, not on the royal family itself, which still walks tall in a charming but anachronistic manner in this race of tall and dignified people.

Religion: Christian

Sources: *The State of the World's Children 1991* and information supplied by author.

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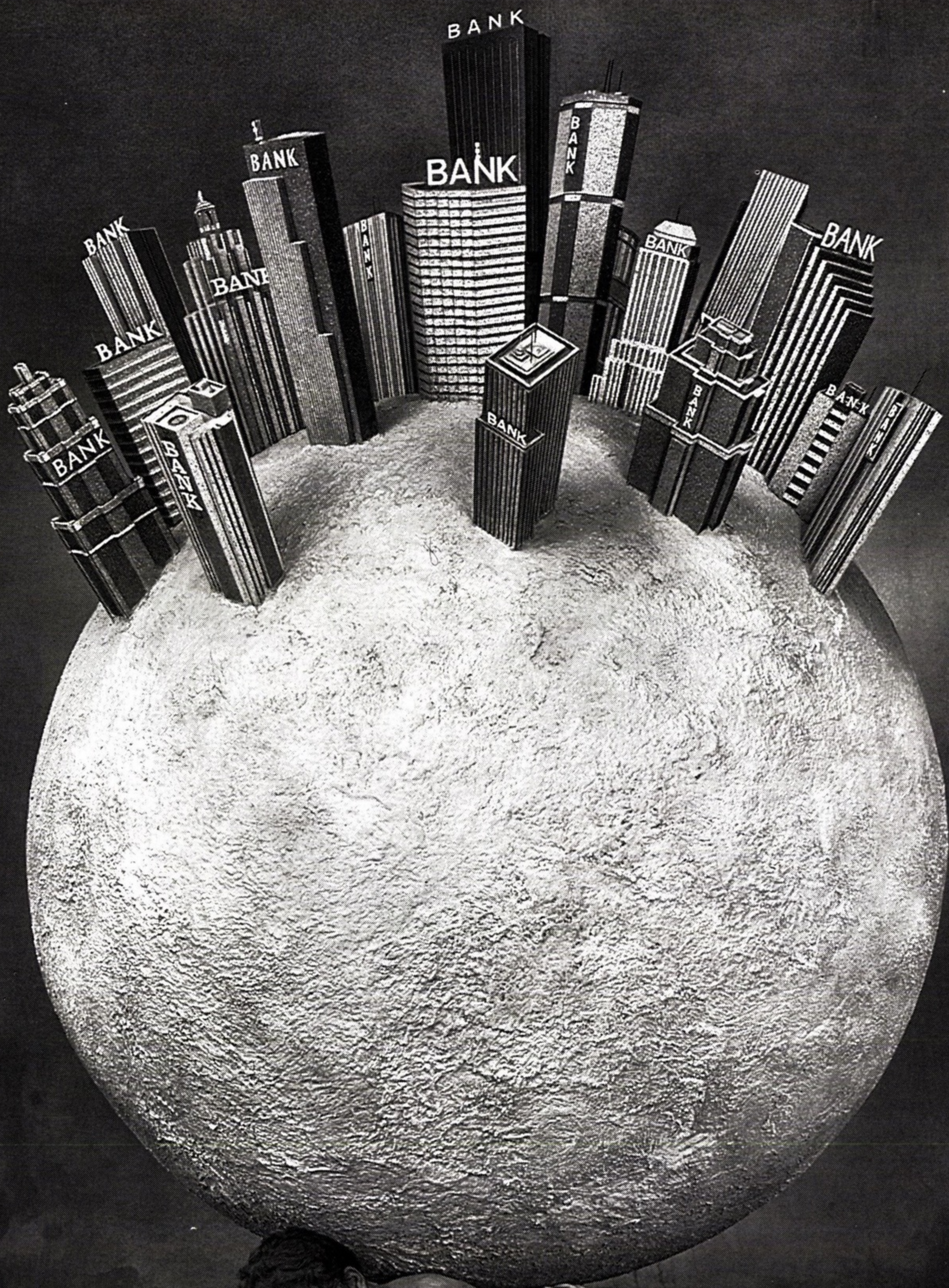
But by keeping these debts open, they can keep the tax-relief and still demand billions in interest payments.

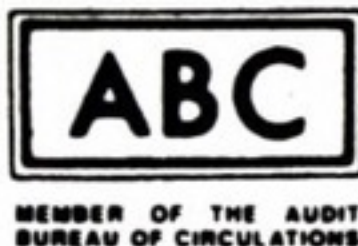
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Some different angles for the Christmas season

GREEN CHRISTMAS CARDS

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- How about a nut-roast this Christmas?
(inside) *Wishing you an alternative Christmas*
- Robin red breast and paint pot
(inside) *Here's to a green Christmas*
- Snowpeople against global warming
(inside) *Have a cool yule*

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